92-06918/

LANGUAGE AND LEARNING :

EFFECTING CHANGE THROUGH COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH IN MULTILINGUAL SCHOOLS

VOLUME II

Final Report to the Ontario Ministry of Education
on Grant No. 1000 under the Block Transfer Grant to OISE

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September 1989

A Case Study of Three Chinese-Canadian Children in Toronto

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Introduction

The three children chosen from each of the grade-cohorts in this case study are Ben Wong, Charles Lee, and Linh Chan, two boys and one girl. I followed these three children and the five peers in each of their classes over a three-year period, observing their interactions with adults, peers and texts as well as their experience in acquiring language and using it. I hope that, through writing about these children, I will shed some light on the understanding of the schooling of language minority children.

Every classroom has its own personality, a result of the unique characteristics of the participants, the teacher and the children. Furthermore, the expectations of the teacher and the children, the classroom discourse, the resources, the seating arrangement, and the decorations also contribute to the nature of a classroom. When the children and the teacher come to school, they bring a store of knowledge and experiences with them which they have already acquired outside the classroom. In writing about children's learning experiences and the acquisition of literacy, one has to take a close look at the classroom environments in order to understand the kinds of learning opportunities that are provided and how the children utilize those opportunities. In addition, one must acknowledge the social and cultural aspects that affect learning and teaching.

The classrooms that are about to be discussed here are from Senior Kindergarten to Grade Six; it was in them that the case-study children were observed. During the three years of the project, the three children interacted with six teachers in all; for each child spent two of those years with the same teacher. The allocation of the children in terms of teacher and grade is shown in the following diagram:

Project Yr	GR	TEACHER	CASE-STUDY CHILDREN
1	SK	A	Ben Wong
2	1	B	Ben Wong
3	2	B	Ben Wong
1	2	C	Charles Lee
2	3	D	Charles Lee
3	4	D	Charles Lee
1	4	E	Linh Chan
2	5	E	Linh Chan
3	6	F	Linh Chan
Total:			
3 years	9 classes	6 teachers	3 case-study children

Discussing the classrooms highlights the classroom contextual information as well as providing an understanding of possible variables that affect children's learning. It is not an attempt to evaluate the individual classroom nor to criticize the teaching practices. Nevertheless, the analysis would be difficult without mentioning the teacher's thinking, classroom discourse, or classroom management.

Chinese Culture

Before the analysis of the three case-study children, it is important to provide some information in relation to their cultural and social backgrounds. The Chinese ethnic origin children who are involved in our research project are the second generation of Chinese Canadians, that is to say their parents are first-generation Chinese immigrants in Canada. This implies that the ties with the ethnic traditions are still visible and their impact is great.

Confucianism, as a philosophy, has been an essential part of Chinese politics and ethics. Chinese people have followed the teachings of Confucius (B.C. 551-479) for more than two thousand years. The Confucian ideology penetrates deeply into the collective mind of the Chinese from the time of their earliest upbringing and leads them to act dutifully to the family and society. The family, therefore, is the place where a person forms most of his attitudes and learns his deportment. Listening and observing is strongly emphasized by Confucius, who says, 'There may be those who act without knowing why. I do not do so. Listen as much as you can and select what is good to follow; observe as much as you can and remember it.'[1] This ethic has been passed on from generation to generation.

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[1] Confucius. the Analects of Confucius.

When children are told to keep their mouth closed and not to ask too many questions, it does not mean, as it appears on the surface, that children do not have the right to ask questions. There is a profound moral teaching hidden underneath. It means that children should learn by listening and observing before they ask. The emphasis on learning via observation and listening is a traditional approach to education, even though asking questions is also considered important in the process of learning. Young learners are expected to acquire knowledge as individuals by constant observation and listening. Another popular saying is 'only a half barrel of water clinks', which is equivalent to 'a small brook gurgles'. It means that only those who do not know enough will speak aloud and randomly. It implies furthermore that the more knowledge one has, the more scrupulous one should and will be when speaking. When Chinese children bring this cultural expectation of learning style to school, there may begin a mismatch between home and school.

This typical cultural expectation of behaviour for Chinese children is commonly perceived at school as a lack of an inquisitive mind, a passive learning attitude, lack of participation, lack of initiative, etc. As an observer in school, I have received comments from some teachers to the effect that the Chinese children are too quiet and show little enthusiasm (because they don't ask enough questions).

Although linguistic mismatch initially impedes children's literacy learning and may lead to academic failure, I believe that, besides the linguistic mismatch, there is also a cultural mismatch, that may have a far-reaching impact as well. The cultural mismatch is neglected because of its hidden nature. The behaviour of many non-mainstream children is often misinterpreted because of the difference in cultural perspectives. For example, in Chinese culture, children are traditionally taught to be tolerant and modest or humble. The saying, 'little children should have ears but no mouth', is prevalent among Chinese families, especially among those parents who highly regard the value of learning by observation.

Some researchers argue that using a cultural mismatch perspective to explain children's low academic achievement is overly simplistic as an explanatory scheme[2] , but in practice little attention has been given by educators to the the importance of recognizing and identifying aspects of this mismatch. Therefore, it is essential to make school personnel aware of it so that a way may be found to minimize the friction between the different cultures in order to improve children's learning conditions.

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[2] Suzuki 1977, Steinberg 1981, Sue and Padilla 1986

The Children

Ben Wong

Home Background

Ben is the youngest of three siblings. He has one elder sister and a twin brother named Albert. In fact, Ben and the twin brother were two months premature and delivered by caesarean operation; and as Ben was given a tag called B by the doctor in the delivery room, he became the younger one, whereas Albert was given an A tag. On the basis of the alphabetic labels, the parents named their children with the order that was provided by the hospital staff. The twins were born under weight, both were only two pounds. They both suffered from underweight, especially Ben's brother, who would have died had he not received a blood transfusion. The family spent a lot of time taking care of Ben's twin brother, who seemed to be slower in learning due to his physical weakness and his severe short-sightedness.

Ben's older sister and his twin brother also went to the same school but the twin brother was placed in a different classroom. Ben's father used to own a dry cleaning shop but after the twin brothers were born he sold the business and stayed home, looking after the children and taking care of the household chores. The change in the father's role from a business man to a house-husband was necessitated by the twin brothers needing intensive care physically when they were born, especially Ben's older brother Albert. I noted during my visits that the interactions between the father and the children were frequent. The activities taking place at home were predicatable. The parents woke up the children around seven thirty in the morning, and dressed and fed them; and at ten to nine, Mr. Wong walked the children to the school; he picked them up around twelve o'clock for lunch at home and then walked them back to the school by one o'clock. Mr. Wong went back to the school around four to take them home again The mother came home around five thirty or six, and then the family had supper together. The children were told to go to bed around nine thirty. Saturdays and Sundays were the days for grocery shopping and dim-sum.[3] The whole family regularly went to Chinatown for their dim-sum brunch together on the weekends. They visited a variety of restaurants. Occasionally they would visit their relatives who live in a town called Bradford outside the city. Observing the routines that Ben's family had, it is evident that the activites were mostly family oriented and they encouraged close interaction among the family members.

Ben's mother was a payroll clerk who had studied two years at business college in Canada. Compared with the father, she had achieved a higher level of education. The father completed his junior high school education in China, and then went to Hong Kong to work. When he arrived in Hong Kong he intended to continue his education but did not have the opportunity; instead he started his own business. He lost a big fortune in the business in Hong Kong, so the dream of going back to school vanished. He determined to regain the lost fortune by trying a variety of businesses. When he finally profited from the business, he came to Canada and established another business of his own in dry cleaning which at one time employed sixteen people.[4]

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[3] A popular Cantonese style of meal, which is composed of a variety of small dishes and served by different servers who push a trolley, which contains one or more particular dishes in the restaurant.

[4] home interview, Sept 17/86, tape A side #140

Language used at home

The family has resided in the school area since 1979 and owns a modern design house with a drive-in garage underneath the house. The languages mainly used in the neighborhood are English, Chinese, Portuguese, and Italian. The mother speaks English; but it was apparent to me that most of the matters related to the children were handled by the father for a simple reason - he spent most of the time with the children. Nevertheless, because the mother speaks English, she is usually the one who contacts the school staff and participates in school-home activities, for example, at report card time, it is she who goes to the school.

Ben is very close to his older sister, Amy, and most frequently interacts with her at home. As for Albert, even though he is considered older than Ben, Ben is attentive to him and looks after him as if Albert were the younger one. In fact, Albert is physically weaker than Ben. Albert moves slowly due to his vision problem, so Ben tends to help Albert to carry things at school and at home. The siblings get along well. It is apparent to me that Ben lives in a harmonious family atmosphere.

The mother has adopted an English name, Jenny, but the father has kept his Chinese name, Nam-Kim. The parents interact with the children in Chinese (Cantonese) but amongst themselves the children use both Chinese and English. The paternal grandmother, who speaks Toisanese and now resides in Montreal, used to visit the family frequently and spoke her language to the grandchildren, hence Amy, the oldest child, speaks Toisanese more fluently than her siblings and the mother. So now the main language used in the household is Cantonese, because the mother cannot speak Toisanese.

Ben is fond of watching television, in particular cartoons and Sesame Street programmes, and is passively allowed to continue this fondness. A Chinese pay channel has been established in Toronto lately, so Ben and the rest of the family spend even more time in front of the television. By watching a great deal of Chinese television, Ben has greatly improved his oral language skills in Chinese. The L 1 assessment results show that Ben has made a great deal of improvement in his four language skills in Chinese. The argument for allowing the children to watch so much televison is that the parents are afraid the children, in particular the twins, will get hurt from playing outside of the house, and watching television becomes one of the ways of refraining the children from going out.

Reading activities occasionally occur. Sometimes the mother reads to Ben the English books that he brings home from the school library. The siblings also like to engage in role playing because the older sister Amy loves to do it and the twins follow her. Chinese does not occur in reading because the parents do not think the children would comprehend it in reading, so it only appears in story telling. The mother tells stories in Chinese to the children. Amy, the older sister, sometimes reads to Ben, but the children are most fond of watching television.

The father sometimes gives assistance in basic skill learning, such as assisting Ben in recognizing numbers, letters, or explaining some simple words: tigers, lions. But this does not occur very often because, as the father indicates, the children simply are not asked to do work at home; there is no homework given by the teachers.[5]

Amy is considered intelligent and mature by the parents and is given great respect by both the parents and the siblings; hence, she is a real leader of the siblings. Amy is in a higher grade, so is involved in writing more often than the brothers. Writing is emphasized in this home, as can be seen from the excitement and pride the parents demonstrated when Amy wrote a letter to her mother during the time the mother went on a visit to Hong Kong by herself. Colouring books are also purchased for the children. But the actual daily life activities are not closely related to literacy learning in any organized or systmatic ways; it is more an ideology. However, both parents consistently emphasize the importance of education.

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[5] Home interview, Sept 17/86, Side A, near the end of the tape.

At School

Project Year 1 - Senior Kindergarten

At school Ben was considered to be a top student academically, but his social interaction was limited. When Ben and his twin brother first entered the school, they were placed in different classrooms. The teacher separated the twins, thinking that Ben tended to be too attentive to his twin brother Albert. He tried to protect the twin brother in every respect; consequently, the senior kindergarten teacher thought that it would be more beneficial to the twins to place them in different classes.

According to the kindergarten teacher, Ben "settled in reasonably well to school routines. He was a fairly quiet, shy, sensitive child. At first he stayed a little aloof from proceedings. He sat back and watched until he was sure what was required of him. He took a quiet part in group songs and games, singing beautifully. He was just beginning to speak up with his ideas, both on a one-to-one basis with the teacher and in front of the whole group (if some topic raised his enthusiasm). He was able to express his thoughts reasonably well in basic English. He also seemed to understand most of the English he heard in the classroom. There was really no social contact with the other children in the classroom.

At first, Ben had great difficulty in choosing activities. He tended to wander and needed adult help."[6] The teacher felt that this was probably due in part to sister Amy's "managing" at home. The teacher felt that Ben relied on Amy greatly. He was usually able to keep busy on his own. His lack of large muscle experience could be seen in his awkwardness in climbing stairs, his problems coming down slides, and his handling of other outdoor activities. As the teacher indicated, "In this area of development (outdoor activities) Ben really needed working on." The teacher was convinced that the home had played a definite part in this development. He seemed to adjust better in the swimming pool. The teacher said that Ben was always very cooperative and was really over-anxious to please. He exhibited anxiety and worry very quickly.[7] This is what Ben was like in the early stage of his education at school. But he progressed in many aspects in senior kindergarten from the teacher's perspective.

Ben was always more advanced than his peers in his reading and writing through the school years. To Ben, reading was to 'learn a lot of word(s)'; he also thought reading 'can help you learn writing' in grade one and he thought that was what reading was good and/or useful for. He was then not as confident as a reader. When I asked him in grade one, "Do you think you are a good reader?" He replied, "A little. I only know a little words." But, by grade two, his response had changed. When the same question was asked of him in grade two, he said, "Yes, mostly Chris is a good reader. I'm good at words. Denny is not so good." It seems that he had built up his confidence in reading and even knew who were good or bad readers in the class at the grade two level. When I asked him, "Who is the best reader in your class?" He replied, "Me and Chris." His peers in the class all thought Ben was one of the best readers among them because they knew about the level of the reading group he was assigned to. It was the highest. Ben had enjoyed writing since kindergarten and continued to do so.

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[6] Teacher's interview, Nov 30, 1985

[7] Teacher's interview, Nov 30, 1985

Project Year 2 - Grade One

During grade one when there was a free activity time, Ben would choose to read. He was a fluent writer but he had a tendency to leave out spaces between words, so after a certain period of time, if he was asked to read his story, he would not be able to recall it accurately. He was aware of this too but never changed that habit in grade one, nor in grade two. Once in grade one, the teacher gave Ben an instruction on how to space words as follows:

Teacher: Ben! I wanna see what you are doing there.

Ben: (makes funny noise)

Teacher: What does hi hi hi hi mean?

Ben: (smiles in a friendly way; some children speak in the background.)

Teacher: Let me see. Um-. Oh **dear** Ben (surprised)

Student1: Oh dear Ben (a boy imitates the teacher in the background)

Teacher: Let me show you uh- the words you did last time. (turns over to the previous writing]

Ben: Okay (in singsong tone).. * last time. That's-

Teacher: Do- do you see how you put spaces between letters. I want you- between words- I want you to write me some spaces.
Okay? because otherwise I don't know.
Is this one word here?

Ben: No.

Student 1: 'Before yesterday' (the child tries to read Ben's writing)

Teacher: it's not one word?
Where - Can you read this (=the story) to me?

Ben: Before yesterday I-'

Teacher: Okay-

Ben: It- (self-correction)

Teacher: Li-listen to me for a second.
Let's read it slowly.

Ben: 'Before yesterday' (reads slowly).

Teacher: How many words are there 'before yesterday'?

Ben: Hum - (thinking)
Two!

Teacher: all right - so you have to have some spaces.
Is it ‘be. fore yesterday’ or is it ‘before yesterday’?

Ben: ‘Before yesterday’

Teacher: So how many words are there?

Ben: Uh- three.

Teacher: Count them...

Ben: (points his finger to the words and starts counting them silently)

Teacher: Okay- ‘before. yesterday’ (reads slowly and underlines the words in pencil)
How many words are there?

Ben: Two!

Teacher: Two!
I wanna see the space here- ‘before’ is one word.

Ben: Okay!

Teacher: ‘yesterday’ is another word and I wanna have see this space here..(points to the space between these two words)
Now there is a little space here that’s okay (points to the text)
Here (=the following line) I don’t have any spaces at all.
I must have some spaces. ‘before yesterday’..(starts reading the writing)

There was no question that the teacher considered Ben bright and well-disciplined, and in grade one the teacher ranked him first among the children. Once the teacher asked Ben to read one of his stories for him. In that story, Ben wrote that he and his sister saw 73 fireworks on Victoria Day. The teacher asked him how he knew there were 73. Ben replied without any hesitation that he counted them. At that point, I noted that the teacher was very impressed.

Project Year 3 - Grade Two

Whenever it was tidy-up time, Ben always did the cleaning up tasks thoroughly and dutifully. The teacher frequently commented on Ben’s good work and would tell the children "Ben has done a good job and helps me clean up the room" or "I like the way Ben works". At the beginning of grade one, Ben was very shy and kept a good distance from the teacher; but he changed gradually and interacted with the teacher, peers, and myself comfortably. The teacher, who was so concerned about Ben’s shyness and aloofness, tried to influence Ben. By grade two, Ben was completely open in the class. At the end of grade two, academically Ben was not graded as number one by the teacher, but the teacher was very pleased with his progress in social interaction. As the teacher remarked:

> Ben has always been an excellent student, very introverted and shy. I think socially he’s made very very good progress. Now he is much more open and makes friends more easily. With Ben, I am also pleased that Ben has started to be a bit of a discipline problem. Actually, I am pleased about that because he has always been so petrified of me and of other children, of grown-ups especially. He was always so polite and meek. Now he is being a little trouble-

> maker and he has accelerated this. He (=Ben) says he doesn't need me any more and he is going to another room and he will never come and visit me. This is a baby room and now he is all grown up and he doesn't need to be in the baby room any more.

Conclusion

All the time that Ben had been in school, the teachers seemed to worry about what they identified and labelled as his "social skills". In his grade two final report card, the teacher graded him as three (=satisfactory) instead of one (=very good) in his overall performance. On the other hand, the teacher still indicated, as in the above quotation, that he was pleased with Ben's progress socially, which had all along been his major concern.Ben.

Ben himself, however, felt that he did not learn enough from the teacher. Ben said, "I don't like him. He teaches simple math. If we don't learn difficult math, by grade three I would not know anything." The child felt that there was no challenge in the class. As this interview data shows, he was also able to identify his own academic needs and to express his anxiety. Obviously, Ben was concerned about his academic development, particularly in math, and how it might affect his future learning in grade three. He did not like the teacher because he thought the teacher did not provide him with enough challenging work.

From the classroom observations made, the teacher, in fact, was very keen about math activities. He had provided the children with many math related activites which go beyond mere desk work. For example, he asked the children to collect chestnuts from the streets in the neighborhood and had the children enter the count daily. Unfortunately, simple activities such as this probably were not considered as math activities by the child. His concept of math seemed to involve actual calculation of numbers. In addition, such math-related activites in the classroom were not accessible to Ben's parents, who could only assess the child's math achievement by his ability to calculate numbers on paper. Ben's parents were not aware that the school system considered such activities to be relevant and useful in developing math concepts in children. As a consequence, his conceptual development in math remained invisible to his parents; hence, both he and they were disappointed.

Another major component of a child's experience in the classroom is classroom discourse. By using language to teach or to learn, significant interactions occur between children and the teacher. Hence spoken language becomes an important part of the identity of the participants in the classroom because it is the medium by which much teaching and learning takes place.[8] The fact that speech makes available to reflection the processes by which one relates new knowledge to old is commonly believed. Thus, the emphasis on using oral language to interact in the classroom for the construction of knowledge prevails in schools, in particular for the primary children. Show and Tell is an example. Show and Tell is one of the curriculum periods that is designed for young children to learn how to take turns, to express their ideas in a group, to get the attention of others in a setting that is formal and demands more significant input.[9]

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[8] Courtney B. Cazden, 1986, p. 432

[9] S. Savignon, 1983. 'Definitions of Communicatiave Competence' in Communicative Competence:Therory and Classroom Practice. Reading, Mass:Addison-Wesley.

However, when this belief is put into practice in classrooms, it may be a learning opportunity of which children whose first language coincides with the school language can take best advantage. For those children who come from different linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds, the use of oral language to interact with adults or peers in the classroom requires a deeper understanding of their use of language by educators. There are differences in the norms as to what counts as scoial ability in children. As in the case of Ben, it is not his language competence that is the root of what his teachers perceive to be a problem with "social skills". Instead it is a cultural difference.

Ben was from a family where both parents had received sufficient education to help him with his school work and teach him the school language - English. Compared to other language minority children, Ben adjusted to the school community much more easily linguistically than others who came from a similar cultural background. His compentency in math and language was acknowledged by the teacher and his peers. From the child interview, it was apparent that Ben was named by other children in the same class as a good speller and a good reader and he was also considered good in math. Nevertheless, his reticent attitude, from the teacher's perspective, inhibited his social interaction. A narrow interpretation of being sociable is to engage in oral interactions with a variety of people in different situations. Ben, despite his compentency in English, did not interact comfortably with adults or with a large group of children.

From my point of view, the emphasis on social interaction in current primary education does not always fit Chinese traditional beliefs and values, especially in such classroom activities as Drama and Show and Tell. As indicated in the beginning, young children are encouraged to learn by listening and observing - "listen as much as you can and select what is good to follow; observe as much as you can and remember it." According to the Chinese traditional culture, talking and "showing off" one's own possessions is rude and unacceptable because it is considered egocentric. Thus, Chinese children have to modify their behavior when they enter Canadian schools, learning to believe that it is proper to talk about yourself and to show off your property in public to a large audience, as in Show and Tell situations.

As Ben's father indicated during the interview, Ben seldom went out to play or interact with people outside the family because his parents were afraid that he might get hurt. This restriction may have enhanced Ben's reticence; however, it is a very typical way in which parents express their love and concern for their children. In addition, Chinese families value respect for their elders by children as a form of love. On the other hand, his grade one and two teacher tried very hard to make Ben sociable by interacting with him in a manner in which the authority distance between adult and child was not maintained. What was considered acceptable social behavior between adults and children by the Grade One and Two teacher certainly does not coincide with Ben's own or his parents' expectations. The teacher tried to help the child articulate his own ideas, thoughts, and feelings with confidence and lucidity, providing opportunities in various activities, like drama and story sharing. Without being aware of it, and in spite of the home, the child gradually modified his behavior and opened up to others. Nevertheless, he still felt that the teacher did not provide him with "hard" work and thought that he would not be able to cope with the third year. The point is that, although, at the end of Grade Two, Ben has adapted to the social behavior of the classroom, he still holds to the belief of his culture that what counts as school achievement is not the social but the academic. It is unfortunate that neither the parents nor the child recognized the teacher's endeavor to promote the child socially.

Education in the Primary and Junior years is of paramount importance becuase the experiences of these early formative years mould the child's attitudes to learning and provide the basic skills and impetus for his continuing progress.[10] Even though Ben has progressed socially, his loss of confidence in the teacher is a pity. Misunderstanding of the teacher's teaching philosophy prevents the child from establishing a confidence in learning. From Ben's case, it is apparent that a teacher's communication with the parents as well as the child with respect to his teaching philosophy is fundamental and crucial. Much more has to be made explicit, rather than assume tacit shared assumptions.

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[10] Ministry of Education. *The Formative Years*. p 4

Charles Lee

Home Background

Charles is the youngest child and the only boy in his family. His grandmother and parents all call him "bebe" (in Chinese, 'baby' in English). His sisters call him by his English name, Charles. His mother and sisters take him to church every Sunday. The father is not a Christian and therefore is exempt from this Sunday regular activity. Charles's grandmother, 81 years of age, looks after him most of the time. When Charles was small, he slept with the grandmother. The father stays home and cooks for the family because he has retired early from his job in his mid-fifties. The mother is a fashion designer, specializing in wedding garments. In terms of fashion design, she is self-taught. When Charles' eldest sister got married, the mother sewed all the outfits for every member of the family for this wedding. Charles has four elder sisters who are older than him; their ages range from 9 to 15. Their house is located in the centre of Kensington market where the neighbors are composed of various ethnic groups, but Portuguese and Chinese in majority.

The family still retains some traditional customs, although they have lived in Canada for more than two decades. For example, during the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival, Charles brought to school a special kind of food called 'zong', which was prepared for the festival. He also got a 'red envelope', lucky money (hong-bao which symbolizes 'good luck'), on his birthday from his parents and grandmother as is traditional on children's birthdays or on the Chinese New Year Day; in addition, his parents gave him presents and bought him a Chinese cake.

It is very obvious that Charles is the apple of the eye among the elders of his family and his father is aware of it. In his junior kindergarten ABC report, his teacher comments :'Father reports he is not shy, maybe a little spoiled (with 4 older sisters)'.

At School

Charles is a very friendly and courteous child. When I first met him in the school, he took the initiative in interacting with me which was very different from the other children, who tended to be shy and avoided talking to me. Charles is one of the children in the class that wins the teacher's heart. He seldom gets yelled at; even when he breaks the rules, he is teased rather than blamed. The teacher never seems to raise her voice to Charles and tolerates well his errors and occasional mischief. Charles is precise and well organized, which characteristics show very clearly in his handwriting, in the ways he deals with his personal belongings, and even in the ways he writes his stories, which will be discussed later.

Charles likes to work with boys most of the time, especially the ones that he respects. Charles chooses Allen to be his best friend and the one with whom he likes to work because he thinks Allen is 'very smart'.[11]

In Grade Two, I noticed that Charles was different from his peers. He was fluent in English and his communication skills were considered to be above average by the teacher.[12] He interacted with adults and peers in a polite and an amiable manner. However, his reading and writing competence did not seem to match his oral language fluency. In his reading, his decoding skills were poorly developed, and he still used a fair amount of invented spelling in his written texts.

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[11] 1st year child interview

[12] see winter 85 SOLOM

Project Year 1 - Grade Two

First Language (L1) Competence

Charles speaks a dialect of Cantonese (Toisanese) at home, so when he goes to school, he does not use the dialect to interact with his Chinese peers, who mostly speak the standard dialect of Cantonese, which is the dialect taught in the Heritage Language class as well. The heritage teacher thinks that Charles is reluctant to speak Cantonese because of his accent, even though he is capable of speaking the language. As a result, Charles seldom uses Chinese in the school environment except in the heritage language class. The only time I saw him speak Chinese was to interpret for the English teacher when the teacher was desperate to communicate with a new immigrant Chinese student. Charles happened to sit beside the girl and was asked frequently by the teacher to interpret the instructions of various tasks to the new student.

L1 Reading -

Charles could read his numbers in Chinese and a few basic words, such as his name, I, snow, up, down. But, in general, his reading skill in L1 appeared to be low.

L1 Writing -

His writing in L1 was very limited. He could write his name and a few words, but was unable to extend his writing in sentence forms.

Competence in English (L2)

L2 Reading -

Charles enjoys reading stories, specially scary stories. In the grade two class, there were two reading periods, one in the morning before the class started, another in the afternoon shortly after the children came back from lunch. They both were silent reading periods. Together with his peers, Charles was asked by the teacher to record the titles of all the books that he had read. It appeared from Charles' record that he had done his reading faithfully in the daily reading periods.

When Charles read, he had a habit of pointing with his finger at the word that he was reading. He sometimes read aloud, but in a very low voice. He read slowly which may have benn the result of pointing at the words. He belonged to one of the four reading groups, called 'blue reading group', which was the third one in terms of reading ability.

In this class, reading played a very important role. The teacher provided many reading opportunies and took the initiative in inspiring the children to read; in addition to the silent reading periods, she read with the children twice a week in small groups, which were organized on the basis of their reading level. The teacher also read to the children whenever she felt time permitted. For example, she read to the children during calendar time, snack time, and when she received a good story book from a publisher. She regularly ordered books from publishers for individual children, for the whole class and even for her colleagues in the school. It is evident that reading was emphasized and a continuous activity in this class.

L2 Writing -

Writing seemed to be laborious for Charles. He wrote a diary almost everyday as one of the morning routines in the grade two class. However, he never wrote more than one page and many of his diary entries were simple and short, such as the entry for

Thursday, January 16, 1986:

'Yesterday I jaest watch TV an play an went to bed. An I did the same thing ovre'

The entries were either stories, mostly related to his personal experiences, or letters. For instance, on May 7/86, he wrote a letter to his mother as follows:

'Dear Mom I love you very moch (=much). I love my mom alot (=a lot). Thek (Thank) you for soving (=solving) my problems

Love Charles Lee'

The letter starts by addressing his mother, but in the second sentence it switches to another audience. Then, in the last, it returns to his mother. In these pieces of writing, at least, it appears that he is still not able to create a unified space/time structure by means of the linguistic markers of tense and person (Bruner, 1986).[13]

Nevertheless, during the year, he progressed well in his story writing. In February, Charles wrote a story entitled 'The Old Man Who Fell Down From the Building', which was published in the class. He wrote:

'When I was six years old. I saw an old man. He got a broken arm and a leg too. This happened when I was six years old. But I do not know if he is alive or not. He fell down in a building. I do not know how it happened.'

The idea in this story is still not clearly expressed and is repetitive, but there are some basic components of story writing in it. He started with a story opener, 'when I was six years old', to inform his reader immediately that this is a story of retrospection. In this particular story the time structure is consistent. He switches appropriately from past tense to present tense and uses both tenses in one sentence.

At the end of the school year, Charles again demonstrated how much his writing had improved. On Tuesday, May 6, 1986, he wrote an interesting story called 'The Dragon That Was Mean'. This was an episodic story and consisted of four chapters each of which maintained the length of one page. The reason that Charles developed the story into four chapters was that he was influenced by the chapter structure of Charlotte's Web (by E.B. White) which was being read to the class regularly by the Grade Two teacher at that time. In fact, several children from that class were also influenced by the Charlotte's Web story and later wrote their stories in a similar format by chapters. The Dragon that Was Mean is written consistently in a third person narrative mode as shown in the first chapter:

'Befor (=before) there was a big dragon. He was very mean he wod (=would) take away a little dragons toy. Evry (=every) time when the little dragons see the big dragon they wod run away. The big dragon waS the tofist (=toughest). One day a tofier (=tougher) dragon came to the dragon town. The tofier dragon was a good dragon. He made the bad dragon og (=go) to the Nothere (=another) town the good dragon found the little The Dragon toys and gave it to them.'

The story was the longest story that Charles had ever produced up to this point (May 86) and it was his favorite story. The unification of person appears to be consistent in this story and so is the use of tense.

Project Year 2 - Grade Three

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[13] However, it may be that the inconsistent use of tense results from an imperfect command of English morphology rather than from an inability to maintain a consistent time frame.

The Grade Three year was a very different experience for Charles. He joined a mixed grade class with some of his friends from grade two with the remainder of the children coming from a previous year's grade three class. His class teacher was particularly interested in children's writing. She was also a lover of nature and often brought plants, insects and animals into the classroom to share with her students. Children were encouraged to carry out project work by observing and studying living things and, in this way, writing was integrated with the project work. In this class, writing was the first thing the teacher asked the children to engage in when they entered the classroom in the morning; whereas, in the previous year, reading had taken that role.

This mixed grade class differed from the previous class in many respects, but the major differences were the nature of the foci within the curriculum and the ways in which the teacher interacted with the children. Different teachers are bound to have different philosophies of teaching, which guide them to perceive and interpret the curriculum in different ways, since they bring their practical life experience to the school and impose their knowledge on their teaching practices. Each creates a unique classroom environment for the children and this has a great impact on their learning experience.

The Grade Two teacher focused on reading and free writing; she encouraged the children to read and to write as much as they possibly could. She did not assign topics or give specific instructions when asking the children to write. The grade three teacher, by contrast, concentrated more on writing, for which she gave specific instructions on what could be written and on how to revise the drafts. These two different experiences of discovering written texts certainly benefited Charles greatly.

L1 Reading and Writing -

Charles continued to attend the Heritage Language Programme in the school three times a week. But, because of the nature of the observations in school, the heritage classes were not included in the observation schedule. In addition, no L1 assessment was made during this year (September 86 - June 87).

L2 Reading and Writing

The third grade teacher was keen on writing and, along with her interest in science and nature, she encouraged the children to engage in project writing. Consequently, the writing periods were integrated with the environmental studies, science, story writing and some other time blocks, such as handwriting, spelling. In this class, writing was a dominant activity and reading seemed to be an independent activity within a predesigned time block.

Project Year 3 - Grade Four

Reading and Writing -

In Grade Four, the activities that involved reading and writing were similar to the ones in the previous year because the same teacher taught Charles again. In this environment, Charles began to blossom into a confident and autonomous learner. In the remainder of my case study of Charles, I want to explore in more detail how this development took place.

Becoming a Reader and Writer

How children learn to read well is still a secret,[14] the same is true of writing. The study of the relationships between the written texts they engaged with and of the talk around them will perhaps provide us with a better view of how children learn to write well and how literacy skills are acquired and promoted. So, in the following paragraphs, I shall describe the activities of the children in a third/fourth grade class where writing is a focus of the teacher and the children, focusing, in particular, on Charles. My intention is also to show that, despite the fact that the classroom literacy events helped him to carry on a task that interested him very much, the knowledge he had acquired through the literacy events did not easily carry over to his writing. The question is then raised as to why this should be so. To answer this question, and to understand the cognitive part of the learning process that Charles engaged in, we shall need to investigate his oral language - the conversations that he had with his peers during that time. In this investigation, the data collected through the classroom observations will be triangulated with data from the child and teacher interviews and from the teacher-researcher collaboration.

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[14] *******Meek, 1983

Charles Lee, a Chinese Canadian boy who loved science and math, was considered a very bright child whose math skills were in advance of his grade level. He spoke English fluently and yet his reading and writing were a worry to his mother, his teacher and himself. His mother was concerned that, in this aspect of literacy skills, Charles fell behind, and his teacher was worried that he rarely produced a text longer than a single page.

As already mentioned, the teacher was very interested in science and math; in addition, she was very much involved in promoting writing in her classroom. She provided all kinds of opportunities for the children to engage in science projects and the classroom was enriched with a wide variety of materials that were likely to interest them. At one time, there were two gerbils, one guinea pig, one rat, one jar of pond life (diatoms, etc.), tadpoles, goldfish, newts, seven ducklings, three unhatched duck eggs and more than one aquarium containing different types of underwater creatures. In the past, the class had also kept a hamster, a salamander, grey fish, and chicks, etc. Some of the insects or animals visited the classroom for a certain period only, depending on the season, for example, they always had caterpillars in the spring and the class would observe the metamorphosis of the caterpillars.

Writing a science journal was one of the regular tasks that the children were encouraged to do. The children were required to carry out observations from day to day and whenever they had to write up their science projects, they were free to select the area that they were interested in. Most children loved to play with the pets in the room and carried on conversations about the animals or insects. Hence, it was very easy and natural to pick up children's dialogues about animals and their observations of the pets, insects or plants.

> The bell rings and the children come into the classroom. Charles goes to his desk and then a child calls out with surprise because he sees a baby rat in the cage. All the children go to see it, Charles follows. The teacher calls the children to settle down and take out their writing folders. Charles tries to show the teacher a book while the teacher is getting everyone's attention. The teacher does not notice Charles at this moment, so Charles waits for a while, then puts down his book on the desk. The teacher asks the children to stand up and sing O Canada. After the morning ceremony, the teacher asks everyone to have their writing folder closed. Charles is still looking for his writing folder in the writing centre. The teacher calls

> Charles, urging him to hurry up. Charles then comes back. The teacher says to them that they are going to talk about good writing. While listening to the teacher, Charles frowns occasionally. When the teacher asks how many children would like to hear more about the good story, many children put up their hands, but Charles does not. He sits still. The teacher then asks the children to read through their old writing and find a piece that they are going to work on. She says to the children if they have found a good sentence, they may share it with their friend or the teacher.

The above narrative describes a type of event that occurred often in this classroom. Charles had started the writing task the previous week. His page was dated 'Tues. Jan.27.1987'. He had written only one sentence, which read 'Rat-a-tat gets her cage clean when it is very dirty.' Currently, he was supposed to be composing more.

This entire episode took approximately twenty minutes from the moment the bell rang to the end of the discussion. Some children had been writing, but not Charles. His page still remained blank. Only at 9.30 did Charles start his writing task. A few minutes prior to starting his work, he talked to the teacher about what he was to do. The following is the transcript of their conversation.

Charles: Mrs. Segal!

Teacher: Uh-huh?

Charles: I got so many good books from Sanderson (=name of a public library)

Teachers: Oh! Did you?

Charles: I got- I got the recorder one, I got drawing book.

Teacher: I'm looking forward to looking at these books.

Charles: And I- and I also got the Tale of the- Tale of a Green- of uh- of the- well- Green for thing.

Teacher: Did you get a copy of that?

Charles: Yes!

Teacher: That's wonderful! Have you read over your piece of writing?

Charles: I'm doing project- project work.

Teacher: So you start-
This is what you started last week. (points to Charles' writing.)
Okay- let's read the sentence. Read it to me.

Charles: 'Rat-a-tat gets her cage clean when it is very dirty.' (reads the writing)

Teacher: Do you like that piece of writing?

Charles: Yes (nods his head)

Teachers: How can you make it better? Can you think of any way?

Charles: Um- (seems to be thinking) write that there is another- there is a baby one

Teacher: Oh, so you're going to add more details to it.

Yes, that's wonderful, isn't it? so your topic is even more interesting today, isn't it.
Okay, are you going to work by the cage?

Charles: Do you think I should rub this off? (the previous sentence)

Teacher: What do you think?

Charles: It's fine with me.

Teacher: Maybe you could leave it there and go on with the part you want to write today and then maybe decide if that fits or not.

The above dialogue between the teacher and the child shows that the child had been in a very passive position. It was the teacher who focused the dialogue on writing, even though Charles seemed to be more interested in talking about the books he got from the library. The teacher directed the conversation smoothly to Charles' unfinished task by asking him about the task that she wanted all the children to engage in, that is, 'read over a piece of writing'. The child had been trying to compose a piece of science project writing since January 27 which was about seven days ago. The teacher was aware of Charles's slowness in writing, so she tried to prompt him to write more. From their conversation, one would think that it was a good starter for writing for the day because the teacher had given attention and encouragement to Charles and Charles had also shown his interest in writing about the baby rat. One would also expect that Charles would soon go back to his work and write down the ideas about the baby rat.

In fact, he did not. He continued his observation for more than twenty minutes and, at the end of the morning, the total result of his observation was only two sentences, which consisted of just fourteen words. What happened was that, after talking to the teacher, Charles went to sit in front of the rat cage. He sat beside a child named Joao and both of them carried on some conversation while observing the rats. The conversation was all focused on the rat.

J: I'm going to put Rat-a-tat to the front. (moves the rat to the front.)

C: I have to do something with her.

J: Yeah.

C: Today is Monday.

J: Rat-a-tat. How do you spell rat?

C: **RAT** (spells out the word)

J: Yes, but-

C: **A. T A T** (spells out the word slowly)

J: Rat (writes down the word in the book)

C: Don't you know? (asks, surprised)

J: a. tat. (seems to ignore Charles's comment and continues his writing)

Rat-a-tat (reads it to self)

C: Can't you even sound it out?
'M'- (is writing the date in his book, then talks to Joao) You have to write the date. 'Mon-' (verbalizes while writing)

S1: What are you doing? You can't come to this table, you know?

C: Pardon? (does not hear S1 speak)

S1: You can't come to this table.

C: How come? What's wrong with the table?

S1: You will move the-

C: Is it polluted?

S1: Yeah!

C: Polluted with what?

S1: You can't touch it.

C: I'm not touching it.

S1: You make a noise, right?

S2: Sh! (someone is trying to quiet the boys, so they stop talking)..

J: It's so cute, let's show Mrs. Segal.. (speaks softly)
It's not January, it's February. (he sees Charles's first date on the page which says January 27)

C: What?

J: Or you start it on another day?

C: Yeah!

J: Oh-.

C: I started on twenty seven, Tuesday, next- last Tuesday.

J: All right. My brother's birthday was on Wednesday.

C: 'Mon. two'... (verbalizes while writing the date)

J: Right! I put Fab instead of Feb.

C: 'E.' (is still writing the date)

J: You don't have to spell the whole thing.

C: I know. I'm just putting 'Feb. 87'.

[A group of children come to observe the rats and talk about the name of the new rat.]

C: I wonder why Jeffrey said it Wolfgang (=the name of the new rat)

Sx: Because he's like Wolf.

C: What?

Sx: **He he-** (emphasizes he)

C: But how come you say 'gang'?

Sx: Who knows.

J: Yeah, because he wolfgang.

C: There's only two, don't you get it?

J: Wolf gang.

C: It should be wolf friend. Three should be wolf gang.

The discussion of the rat's name is interesting. Charles questioned the term 'gang', which he thought was inappropriate because, to him, it meant more than two. As he put it, 'Three should be wolf gang'. Hence, he suggested that it should be wolf friend rather than wolf gang. Again, a prolonged dialogue occurred, but the final fruit was only the date written in the page. It is not surprising to see how slow the process of writing can be for those who find the experience of trying to compose a painful one.

Another interesting and informative conversation occurred during the observation period, when Joao asked Charles about the length of the rat.[15]

(C:Charles, J:Joao, S:Sean, R:Robert)

J: I would say eight cen- ten centimeters.
Ten centimeters Sean?[16] S:
No way.

C: What? including his tail?

J: No, all his body.

C: No way, it's much bigger.

S: Than ten centimeters!

C: Ten centimeters only that small (shows the length to Joao by fingers)

J: No! it isn't!
I saw ten centimeters.

C: Ten centimeters is- (seems to be talking to self)

J: It is! It's only that

C: That's not!

J: That's!

S: I thought ten centimeters- Is that centimeters? (asks the researcher)

R: Yes, but not that much.

C: This is ten centimeters also.
That's ten centimeters.

J: No, that's inches.

(The boys are still discussing the length of the rat but Charles does not join them. Joao then asks Charles how to spell the word 'centimeter'.)

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[15] EMIY224M. TT1, Feb 2/87, #517, side A, 9:30 am

[16] Tape: #507, Side A, EMIY224M. TT1, Feb 2/87

J: How do you spell centimeters?

C: Hum- (thinking)

J: 'centi. meter' (tries to sound out the word)

C: 'se' that's all. 'sm' I mean.

J: (tries to write the word down)

C: Why don't you just write 'sm' centimeters.

As the boys were trying to decide on the length of the rat, the teacher came to join them and she asked Charles about the rat. By now Charles had written: 'Rat-a-tat has a new friend he is very small an very cute.' The teacher said to Charles:

T: Look at him! just look at him and tell me words. Just look at him.[17]

C: Okay- he looks like um rat-a-tat's baby.

T: He does!
Tell me what else he looks like. Look at his fur, why is it white?

C: It's white and black.

T: What else he looks like?

C: Looks like a hair.

T: What kind of hair?

C: A hair that has white and black.

T: Hum hum, what do you think it will feel like?

C: It's soft, wet.

T: Do you think it's going to be wet?
Can you imagine holding him in your hand?

C: Yes.

T: Yes, do you think what that will be like?

C: Small.

T: Wow! He is really tiny. You hold rat-a-tat, don't you? Imagine!

C: They are really feel small.

T: I thought Rat-a-tat was small before he's there.

C: Yeah.

T: Now having the baby there- (a child interrupts the teacher for a moment)

S1: Seth could have picked him up. He picked him up at home.

T: Hum hum, yeah. He might be able to pick him up at home. (responds to S1)

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[17] #613, side A, EMIY224M.TT1

Now we have got Rat-a-tat and Wolfgang, how you think of Rat-a-tat? How does he look beside Wolfgang? (turns to talk to Charles)

C: She! (raises his voice, correcting the teacher)

T: How does **she** look beside Wolfgang? (laughs slightly)

C: Like- like- he isn't small like that- (his utterances are fragmentary at this point)

T: Hum hum, he looks huge to me.

C: Yeah!

Sx: He looks like- ** body is near.

S1: He would have to wait until he was much bigger for him to mate.

T: Yes, that's true. The male- the little-

S1: But don't think about too much.

T: Yes, he has to be an adult. I saw him **.

S2: Mrs. Segal how do you spell Mediterranean? (a child from another group comes to ask the teacher about spelling)

T: Never mind that, just get straight to the writing and we will talk later.

The discussion with the teacher certainly should have helped Charles to compose his project writing to a certain extent. After talking to the teacher, Charles was involved in a conversation about the rat with another student.

S1: Do you know what the difference is on the little guy and this guy?

C: Yes?

S1: See the little. see the little patch coming down from Wolfgang's patch.[18]

C: Hum hum

S1: It's right there, it's in the back but look at rat-a-tat's, it's much thicker.

C: Hum hum. Yes, there is a little white. A more whole rat-
Oh! my Godsh! she's- she's trying to eat him. She scratch.
Seth! Seth! (calls a boy)
Rat-a-tat scratched Wolfgang. She scratched Wolfgang.

This transcript again demonstrates that the children's observation had gone into more detail. From watching the rats, the children gained a great deal of information about the rats' size, color, and behavior. When Charles wrote the second sentence which he still had not finished by the end of the writing period, he spent a long time on constructing three words, of which he erased one at the end.

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[18] #687, side A, Feb 2/87

Discussion

My question arises from seeing the results of Charles' observation in written text. He certainly had acquired enough knowledge from observing the rats, but why can't he communicate his knowledge in a written form? Many of us believe that through peer conferencing, or peer talk, new knowledge can be shared and constructed. It must be frustrating for educators to see how laborious it is for a child to produce a piece of writing, despite the fact that he had been given considerable support and help. It seems to negate the belief of educators and researchers that, with the provision of literacy events, peer interaction, and teacher consultation and conferences, children can learn how to write effectively. It is never a simple task to teach children how to write and Charles is a good example. To further our understanding of children's written language, we need to investigate their talk around the written texts.

From Charles, we know that we have more to learn about children's writing. It is important to notice the gap between Charles' oral language and his written texts. The observation he had engaged in did not seem to help him create the written texts, whereas Joao, who was engaging in the same observation, was able to record a lot more than Charles. These two boys had also tried to help each other with spelling.

C: 'He is very small and very cute' (reads his own writing)
I am going to put 'rat. a. tat'
Hey, look at that! I spell rat and I put a and I go **rat. a. tat.** (laughing)
Look! a. t

J: Now look what you do! just spell like this, see! dot and another line.

C: I know, that's what I do.

J: Oh yes.

[The boys observe the rats more, then Charles asks Joao to look at his writing.]

C: Do you know what I write- 'rat-a-tat some.. time. T I M E
sometimes scratches. scratches, yes.
How do you spell scratch?

J: **scratch** (tries to sound it out for Charles)
C- S C R A T C

C: S C R A T (Charles repeats after Joao, and writes the word)

J: Wait-

C: Let me see, scratch (prolongs the word)

J: C H

C: (finishes writing the word)

The conversation then switched to the topic of pencils and Charles stopped writing from then on. Having read the transcripts that were produced during observation time, it is time to compare the boys' written texts. From the writing, we see a great difference between Joao and Charles. Joao's writing succeeded in recording core information. He wrote:

Rat-a-tat new friend!

> Rat-a-tat has a new friend and he is very cute he is about 20 centimetres, that's plus his tail. Rat-a-tat is about 30 centimetres, so I guess thats 10 centimetres differense. They almost have the same colours in the same pathe, I said that because wolfgang thats Rat-a-tats friends name.

In contrast to Charles, Joao seems to have no difficulty in transferring the information that he and Charles discuss into a written text. But Charles has only written:

> Rat-at-tat has a new friend he is very small and very cute. rat-at-tat scratched.

This above writing was done when Charles was in Grade Three and he has progressed greatly since then. On September 20, 1987 which is seven month after the previous writing, Charles wrote another piece about gerbils.

> Jeffrey bought two gerbils seven weeks ago. Jeffrey sister got one of the gerbils runing around the house holding the gerbil by the tail then half of the tail came of. The gerbil feels like skin and bones, the gerbil runs very fast when Allen was holding a gerbil that had a half tail, jumped out of Allens hand, then it went to Mrs. Willoughbys class when Jeffrey cought the gerbils that had a half tial was bleeding.

The story was told by a boy in the class named Jeffrey and the children were asked to engage in the study of the gerbils. Another boy named Steve, who worked closely with Charles on the same task, also wrote about this event:

> At Fri. Jeffrey brought in gerbils to the school, one of the gerbil tail came off. Because his sister was holding the bergil tail, and run all over the house. Then she run more faster that half of the tail came off. The gerbil stand like a kungaroo and the gerbil doesn't like if you put your finger in the cage. If you feel the gerbil it feel like skin and bones it is fund holding them that everybodys like holding them I like the one with the tail. The one with not tail it jumped off Allen hand. Then we made a playbox and we are making a second floor and one of the gerbil went to Mrs. Brown class room. and Jeffrey cought the gerbil and went back to our class room.

Comparing these two pieces of writing, it is evident that Steve's writing is more personal and detailed. He gives an account of the gerbil event within a consistent time frame, starting from the point when Jeffrey brought the gerbils to the school, whereas Charles writes 'Jeffrey bought two gerbils seven weeks ago' which seems to be less relevant to the event that had occurred only a few days previously. Steve's writing is also more personal and detailed. He describes the feeling of holding the gerbils and even indicates which gerbil he likes.

Writing is a laborious act mentally and physically. Some people can write without worrying about the appearance of their writing and simply focus on writing down the ideas, whereas others spend hours looking words up in the dictionary, erasing, and recopying. This is why Frank Smith says that composition and transcription can interfere with each other. For Charles there may be many other factors that influence his writing progress; nevertheless, based on the analysis of the observations of his writing behaviors, it is evident that he gives a great deal of attention to the appearance of the writing. For example, he took twenty minutes to write the title of a story on the page for the simple reason that he could not write the words in a straight line. The interview that I had with Charles on revision shows that he was a writer who found difficulty in dealing with too many aspects of writing simultaneously.

Q: Who do you usually ask for editing?

A: Well- I don't really edit my stories.

Q: Who edits your stories then?

A: No one. I just keep it in my folder.

Q: You just- when you finish writing, you just put them back in your folder.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you have to give them to Ms. Segal

A: No. (shakes his head)

Q: No?

A: No.

Q: So, do you do that to all your stories?

A: (nods his head, meaning yes)

Q: All of them?

A: Except for one

Q: Which one?

A: It's about magnets.

Q: Ah! the magnets you made.

A: Yes

Q: Okay- how many stories do you write?

A: Hum- only a few. (looks through his writing folder)

Q: How come you did not want to edit your stories?..

A: Hum- (seems to be thinking)

Q: Or how come you did not do it?..

A: I have nine stories.

Q: Yes, that's a lot then.
Why didn't you edit them?

A: Well- because everytime when I finish the story, I just get- I just get to another story.

Q: You just get to another story, so are you saying, you have no time to edit your previous story?

A: Yes.

Q: Is it?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think editing is important?

A: Oh yes, if you are going to make a book.

Q: Did you make any books?

A: No (shakes his head)

Q: Not even one?

A: I don't want to.

Q: Why not?

A: Because last year when I made three books, I made two of them and it took me ten days for one book.

Q: Ten days for one book. You mean starting from the first page, the writing of the first word until it is published.

A: Yes. and then the third book, I kept on not having time because I had another story too and then I had to edit it at the same time and I did not know what to do first.

Q: Which one? the second story when you were editing, you didn't know what to do.

A: Yes.

Q: Why? which part you did not know?

A: No, because there was another story that I want to make another one.
Only thing I was still working on one of them.

Q: You were still publishing the first one

A: Yes

Q: And then you had another story that you wanted to write.

A: Yes, when I'm publishing, but the only thing I still didn't finish it and it took me- a month just to finish one published book because I had so much do. I was so confused.

Q: In between.

A: And then I kept on making a lot of mistakes

Q: Editing mistakes? like spelling?

A: Yes, because I was so confused, like I just did half of this and I did half of the other story.

Q: Why would it be so confusing to publish a book?
Which part do you think it's most difficult when you are writing or from beginning until the end?

A: Because the teacher Ms. Segal, she told- (interrupted by the school bell) she told me to go faster in working because I was so slow because I only did a few stories and I was trying to rush really- I rushed really fast, so I wrote the other story but I made lots repairs and I made lots errors again on the other one. I even stitched the book the wrong one. I got so confused, so I had to take off- I had to get a new book and then somehow my book got lost and I couldn't find it for five days. And then I had to color it. I had to write the words and then I had to tape the * up. Some how it got smudged and got all dirty. That's why I had to- I take so long because I was so confused.

Q: You avoid doing any editing because it's time consuming, it takes you too much time to edit. But you just told me, when you do editing, you give the story to other people to look at it and they help you. It should not take too much time, if they help you.

A: Yes, but the teacher says that you have to ask a friend and you have to ask another friend to have the spelling check. I mean you have to ask and then you have to have the teacher to edit. And then it's not that easy because most time you- as least five people student do *

Q: Five people do what? sorry.

A: Five people editing the story too and Ms. Segal has to keep on going.

Q: I did not get that part. You mean-

A: Ms. Segal, she takes the longest story first and I don't write so long stories. That's why I am always the last one.

Q: You mean she edited your story the last and then- that means you have to wait for her.

A: Yes.

Q: Okay.

A: And I have to listen to the other stories too.

Q: Now it seems you have changed your strategy. You just continue to write, write and write and write. You don't stop for editing or for anything.
Do you feel better this way?

A: Yes.

Q: Why do you feel better?

A: Because this way I can either- I can either stop the story or just go on to next one.

Q: But then you won't know what you have- what kind of mistakes you have made in the first one. You will just leave it. If you do make a mistake there, you will never know because you don't go back to the first one.

A: I only edit it unless the teacher made- unless Ms. Segal makes me. I did.

Q: You don't think editing is important.

A: Oh it is. I don't really like editing-

Q: I always thought that editing would make better stories.

A: Yes, it does. But the only thing, everytime you have to take a lot of time. And sometimes the teacher calls you and your story doesn't even come up again.

Q: Oh because you might have forgot what you have written before while you are working on the new story.

A: Yes.

Q: That makes sense. I agree with you. It takes time to recall all the details, right? and what you were trying to say before while you were writing the part.

A: Last year, I made quite a few stories and then I had to try to remember some of them and it took me a lot of time to keep on remembering.[19]

Q: Okay- do you know the word 'revision?'[20]

A: Hum- (seems to be thinking)

Q: Do you know what it means?

A: Not really.

Q: What do you mean not really?
Does it mean you have some idea that you are not positive, or you are not quite sure?

A: No, I don't really know what it means.

Q: Oh. Editing, but you do know what editing means.

A: Yes.

Q: It means having conference with people, changing their stories.

A: Yes.

Q: What kind of changes will you make when you edit it- the story?

A: Like uh- see for Steve, most of the times he watches- he watches kind of like um- lots movies and then he watches lots kinds of that have weird languages, like uh really- like um, so that he had- they watch show that had aliens coming to earth and live in. He watches too much of those ** and then he writes about it now.

Q: Oh he writes slang type story. The language he uses is more like slang, right?

A: Yes.

Q: Okay, so he helps him with the story to change it to the conventional, traditional way.

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[19] stops at #452, side A, Revision interview.

[20] tape:#453

A: Yes.

Q: Did you change (=add) new ideas?
When you write, did you ever go back to change your story. You said you did not edit it, but did you-

A: Sometimes I don't finish a story if it gets too boring afterwards.

Q: You just left it. If it is interesting, you continue to finish it. And if you finish the whole story, do you go back to reread it?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you make any changes?

A: Yes, sometimes and then I just leave it in my folder.

Q: What kind of changes do you make if you do go back.

A: Well- I change the spelling maybe and I change a few words.

Q: Do you add new things to the story?

A: Yes, sometimes.

Q: What kind of new things? new ideas?

A: Like um- instead I might change a version like um- instead of saying like- the person was saying, whatever, and then instead I make quotation marks.

Q: Add quotation marks.

A: Yes.

Q: And you don't want anybody to look at your story to give you opinions.

When he was asked to follow the procedures, he got completely confused. The teacher asked the children to have two or three conferences for revision and editing. Charles was unable to cope with the procedures, so he completely stopped revising. He felt it took him too much time and energy to remember what to do next. However, this only shows how Charles perceived the process of writing. The teacher never gave up hope regarding Charles. She continued to be patient with him, waiting for the child to become mature and to blossom. By the last year of the project, Charles has progressed very well in many areas, including his writing.

Conclusion

Language is extremely powerful, controlling human emotion and progress. Through language, we are frustrated, excited, and motivated. Specifically, through written language, we are permitted to have a more substantial period of time to reflect and to reconstruct our thinking. Hence, written language gives better opportunities for communicating, shaping and preserving knowledge. Donald Murray says that writing is "the process of using language to discover meaning in experience and to communicate it"[21] Writing is difficult, not only because it involves so much mental exercise, but also because it is a way in which the writer communicates with other people for the purpose of understanding himself or making himself understood.

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[21] Donald M. Murray, "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery" in C.R. Cooper and L. Odeall (eds), Research on Composing: Points of Departure, N.C.T.E., 1978, p. 86.

I am convinced that the study of children's language in the classroom is essential for understanding the types of learning that occur in and among the children. When the children make their knowledge visible in a written form, we are given a window through which to look into their minds and their thinking. We are given an opportunity to understand how much the children have learned and how they convey that knowledge to their audience by means of the written language.

Linh

Home Backgound

Linh arrived in Canada with her family from Hong Kong in the summer of 1982 when she was five-years-old. Linh's mother works late every day, including Saturdays and Sundays, in the heart of Chinatown, as a hairdresser in a beauty parlor, which is owned by one of her aunts. Her father used to work in a noodle factory, but now works in a new company which, according to Linh, is far away from home. Linh went to her father's new company once but doesn't know what kind of job he has. Linh has one elder sister, who is two years older, and a baby sister, who is nine years younger than Linh. Linh is very close to her maternal grandmother. Even her newborn baby sister is looked after by the grandmother and stays with the grandmother seven days a week. The grandmother gave birth to twelve children; two of them deceased, so Linh has seven aunts and three uncles, who all reside in Toronto. Part of this large group of relatives still live with the grandmother near the school in Chinatown. Even some of those who do not live with the grandmother have their children looked after by her during the day.

In the interview I had with Linh's mother, she told me that none of her brothers and sisters could speak English fluently. They were all born in Cambodia. Linh's parents went to Hong Kong in 1971. The household language is always Chinese. After school, Linh normally goes to her grandmother's house and stays there until eight or nine o'clock at night, when her mother gets off work, then the family goes home together. Therefore, Linh does not have much opportunity to use English at home.

When I interviewed Linh's mother, I asked her if anyone ever told stories to the child at home. The mother said, 'Before coming to Canada, we had more free time to talk to the children and explain things to them; occasionally we took them to movies. But now, we work so hard, we have no energy to do things like this (=story telling). In addition, Linh does not talk to us too much anyway. She mostly talks to her elder sister and plays with her baby sister.' The mother also told me that she felt the child was good at drawing and some people had suggested she let the child take drawing lessons; but the father thought it was too expensive. The mother said that they seldom see doctors, so they have no family doctor. When they are ill, they normally take Chinese medicine.

The mother is a buddhist and believes that everything is destined before one was born. She said 'if one's born to be intelligent, one will be intelligent. It's predetermined. I can't help them (the children) too much.' She also made a great many 'negative comments' about the child. This is a typical way of commenting on one's children to outsiders in Chinese culture, which complies with Confucius's ethic of humility. She said the child 'likes to bother relatives such as patting their shoulder. The child, according to the ESL teacher's report card, was too proud and has stopped improving herself. I therefore scold her for being so proud and ask her to talk more in the class. She is a stubborn child.'

At School

Project Year 1 - Grade Four

First Language (L1) Competence

During this time, Linh used Chinese very often. Either she initiated it or other Chinese children spoke the language to her. The school has a high percentage of Chinese-speaking children because it is in the heart of Chinatown. There are frequently new immigrant children coming to the school who do not know any English; therefore, the Chinese-speaking children who are bilingual are often asked by the school staff and by the new children to interpret. The school has an integrated Chinese Heritage Language Programme which also increases the opportunity to use the language.

Based on the first year observations, it seemed that the bilingual Chinese children spoke the language among themselves; however, if a child who did not speak the language joined in the group, the bilingual children would automatically switch to English. Linh spoke to her peers in both languages, depending on with whom she was interacting. If the peer felt more comfortable in using English, she would speak to the peer in English, and vice versa. But when the teacher talked to her, the child's response was limited or she simply remained silent, even though she knew the answer.[22] The following is an extract from the first year ethnographic notes:[23].

> The teacher asks what immigrants are. The teacher asks Linh but Linh doesn't respond; so T asks someone else instead. The teacher asks the students whoever are immigrants to put up their hands. Linh puts up her hand and also drags Shuying's hand and asks her to put up her hand. The teacher asks Linh when she came to Canada. Linh smiles and doesn't answer. The teacher gives the approximate year to the class when she thinks Linh might have come to Canada.

L1 reading

When Linh was in the heritage class, she was asked to read the words of a hallowe'en song together with her peers as a group. She did not read aloud as some of her classmates did. She sounded as if she were mumbling. She did not open her mouth wide as she was reading the words of the song. She did not seem to be interested in this activity, even though her Chinese was in advance of her peers.

L2 reading

When Linh read in the E.S.L. class, she read silently. She seemed to enjoy reading. She was reading the books silently with a long attention span. At that time, she wrote a story and published it in book form. She told me that she liked the story and volunteered to read it to me. It was called One Two Three Apple Tree and had colourful drawings in it. The story goes:

> One apple tree with juicy red apples
> Falling to the ground.
> Two girls picking Fall apples for winter
> Three different coloured leaves dancing to the grass.
> Four happy rain drops splashing from the sky.
> Five Hallowe'en orange pumkins.
> Six dollor (=dollar) bills to buy Hallowe'en candys.
> Seven corn cobs growing.
> Eight birds flying south.
> A girl looking at nine apples.
> Ten shing (=shining) chestnuts tumbing (=tumbling) onto the
> sidewalk.

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[22] e.g. FWEC108R.ET2, 2:08 pm.

[23] FWEC108R.ET2, 2:19 PM, OCT 31/85

From the two different reading environments, Chinese and English, just described, it seems to me that Linh preferred to do silent reading in general. When in heritage class, she did not read aloud with the class, as everyone was asked by the Heritage teacher to do. However, she read her own story to me which she liked very much. Her reading behaviour seemed to say: 1. she was very much aware of the audience and reading as 'read to yourself' unless she was asked to do otherwise. 2. She was self-conscious about reading in public, so when she was asked to 'perform', she mumbled and failed to 'perform' the task satisfactorily.

Project Year 2 - Grade Five

Linh often had a tendency to give a 'blank' expression when she was listening or concentrating, which could almost be taken as a lack of interest or not understanding or even not paying attention. Although she said that she enjoyed reading most, the Grade Five's reading material, a novel called 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe', bored her because she had heard about the story while she was in Grade Three, according to what Linh told me. This story book was used as the 'study novel' in the class; it was chosen by the teacher. Despite the repetition of the reading material, Linh and another girl, Jessie, were together reading ahead of time, i.e. when the teacher assigned the reading group to read chapters five and six, the two of them were reading chapter eleven.

Linh's favorite expressions, or the expressions she used to answer a question, were usually: 'I don't know', 'I think', 'so so', and shaking her head.

When she read her own writing, she only read it silently. While writing, she always stopped to read what she had written. Reading to the whole class seemed to be a torture for Linh. When the teacher asked her to do so, she would refuse and, if the teacher did not insist on it, then she looked relieved. She needed a great deal of nudging in order to carry on the reading in public. Moreover, when she read, Linh's voice was so soft that it was very difficult to follow her. Her soft voice caused her audience to become distracted easily and this made her even more conscious of her reading performance. It did not seem to help her at all to ask her to raise her voice.

In French class, she was attentive to the French teacher's story reading, but her body language failed to show it (i.e. 'blank look'). If she had the microphone on her, she would play with the cord on the microphone and not look at the French teacher.[24]

Writing -

When Linh was writing, she was seldom off-task as I was observing her. She was a conscientious writer. She could continue her writing for a long time and would not be distracted by others; therefore, she always produced a long text in a short period of time [25] . The only reason she stopped was to ask adults, that is, the teacher, or the researcher, how to spell a word. But that did not happen frequently because she was a good speller. During writing time, her friends would ask her about the spelling of certain words. Other than asking the teacher, Linh would go to a dictionary to look up the words she needed. She seldom asked her peers. I feel that she knew, deep in her heart, that she was better than others.

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[24] see FWEC212R.ETH 10:9

[25] see FWEC225R.ETH 11:00

I feel that on many occasions Linh could have done better in presenting her knowledge of reading and writing to the audience. The way she presented her knowledge or read her writing aloud was not forceful enough and therefore she failed to convey her message to the audience, including the teacher and the peers. It took a person a long time to detect what Linh could really do and how well she could do it in terms of reading and writing. If a child has only been with a teacher for less than 10 months in school, the difficulty for a teacher to completely read her mind is understandable, especially for those children like Linh, who were not trained to display their work or what they knew in an acceptable manner. It was like producing a product without either packaging or advertisement; the sale results were almost predictable.

Project Year 3 - Grade Six

Linh's reticent attitude did not comply with the expectations of the school and the teachers; and yet, her long term quietness and her amiable attitude seemed to be appreciated by her peers by the end of her primary schooling. During the Grade Six's graduation dinner, a simple ceremony was held. A group of children from the class chose her as the most friendly student (they called her the friendliest student). It proves that they liked her and respected her. The process of coming to blossom certainly takes a long period of time.

Reading -

In the third year, Linh had a different teacher. The teacher did an informal assessment for reading and grouped Linh in the best reading group. Linh's reading ability was recognized officially by the school staff for the first time. Children whom I interviewed told me that they thought Linh was a good reader. One of the reasons the children gave me was that Linh belonged to the best reading group; another was that Linh was a good speller. When I asked Linh if she thought of herself as a good reader, as usual, she replied, "I don't know" but she provided enough information to inform me of her reading ability. She said, "I'm in the Panthers", which I knew was the highest reading group at that time.

Linh is an autonomous learner; nevertheless, her consciousness of making mistakes in public prevents her from displaying her knowledge. When I asked her what she found most difficult about reading, she replied, "I don't know. I don't like reading to a group because I'm afraid I will make mistakes."[26]

Writing -

Linh continued to be a fluent writer and was also recognized by the teacher as a good writer. She did a great deal of revision when she wrote and consistently wrote 'first draft' on every first piece of writing. Shirley Brice Heath summarizes school language in six categories,[27] one of which is 'use language on appropriate occasions to account for one's unique experiences, to link these to generally known ideas or events, and to create new information or to integrate ideas in innovative ways." Linh was capable of doing so in writing, either in her first language or in English.[28] However, Linh only succeeded in doing so in writing. She sees writing as a means to "express feeling and a way of telling people"[29] . Linh said that she liked writing but sometimes it was boring, especially when she could not end the story. That was what she found the most difficult about writing.

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[26] child interviews, May/88, p. 3

[27] Heath, S.B. 'Sociocultural contexts of language development.' in Beyond Language: Social and Cultural Factors in Schooling Language Minority Students. Los Angeles, Calif.: Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles.

Before coming to Canada, Linh spent two years in kindergarten in Hong Kong. Linh did not know any English until she started her first year of school in Canada. She attended an E.S.L. class from Grade One until the end of Grade Four. In Grade Four, she was still taken out of the home classroom to attend the ESL class, at the time when her peers were asked to engage in composing.

Linh was always perceived as a quiet child by the teachers. She rarely participated in group discussions, let alone in whole class situations. Most of the time, she interacted with children in her own ethnic group. She kept her interactions with authoritative personnel in school to a minimum. The teachers generally perceived her as a non-creative student. Linh would fulfill the assigned tasks thoroughly, but never cared to announce to anyone the fact that she had finished, unlike most of the children. Her use of language, according to Heath's 'genres', failed to meet with the school's expectations.

In Grade Four, as a rule, an assessment of math and writing was conducted. All the children were asked to produce some story writing and complete a set of math tasks, which were then sent to the Board of Education to be assessed. Linh wrote a story entitled Solving Problem Day. Her writing score on the ABC test was 6.3 and the class average was 6.1 (9=excellent), whereas the city average was 4.8. Linh's score amazed the teachers, both the ESL teacher and the home classroom teacher. The ESL teacher said to me, after receiving the result, that she did not understand why Linh's writing was scored so high and thought it was rather a surprise to her and the home class teacher. The teachers did not think the assessors properly graded that particular piece of writing.

The ESL teacher's general view of Linh was that she was creative enough but she still felt somewhat disappointed with Linh's progress and participation in group discussion. She said that the parents did not do things with the children and never explained things nor read to the children at home. Her general comments, appearing on Linh's report cards, were 'very quiet in group situations'; 'is taking part in our discussions, but has to be asked', 'settles down right away and writes until she has exhausted what she has to say'. Another comment in the report card was 'she is to be congratulated in rising to the challenge and can feel proud of her work.' The word 'proud' was received by the mother in a negative sense, as she indicated to me in our interview[30], despite the fact that the word 'proud' was used in a positive context. The mother's reaction to the word 'proud' shows a typical cultural difference as well as her limited knowledge of English because 'pride' violates one of the Chinese traditional ethics - humility.

One of the incidents the ESL teacher recounted as an example was that, when Linh informed her of the news of her uncle's wedding, she asked Linh about some of the details, such as whether the couple registered in the City Hall first and if they had certain rituals to follow. The answer from Linh was 'I don't know'. From the teacher's point of view, this was the adults' fault: they should have taken the opportunity to explain to the child as a way of educating and communicating with her. This expectation seemed to be reasonable, and yet it did not occur in this incident. However, if the teacher had had some insight into the home culture, she might have been able to see this incident from a different angle instead of feeling disappointed with the child's response.

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[28] see Ll assessment and writing sample.

[29] child interview

[30] The mother said, "The child, according to the ESL teacher's report card, was too proud now that she stops improving herself. I therefore scolds her and asks her to talk more in the class."

A similar attitude was expressed by the home class teacher in the report card: 'Linh must participate more in class discussion', 'must express her own ideas', 'be able to work without being distracted'. The home class teacher also indicated that she noted that some children did not do any school work at home and she thought that there seemed to be a cultural difference in this respect. This view coincided with what the ESL teacher thought about the ethnic groups of children, that is, the failure of children's progress was due, if not completely, at least partially, to the lack of the parents' involvement.

In fact, if the teachers had been able to appreciate the life routines of Linh's parents and of the whole family, they might have had a better understanding of the harsh life that an immigrant family has to go through in order to survive.

Discussion

When examining Linh's use of language in school, it is not difficult to understand why the teachers were unable to detect the level of academic achievement that she had reached, if we use Heath's model of the uses of school language.[31] For example, Heath's fifth item, 'use language to obtain information from non-intimates.' Under this item, Heath gives further explanation by saying, 'children should know how to request and to clarify information, and they should view such information as extending beyond the authority of a particular person or specific occasions to either general use or transfer to similar situation.' Linh certainly did not use her language to solicit information from non-intimates. She also failed to achieve the school expectation in terms of language uses, as Heath puts it, 'use language to sustain and maintain the social interactions of the group.' She simply avoided interactions with any group. As to Heath's item six, 'use language on appropriate occasions to account for one's unique experiences, to link these to generally known ideas or events, and to create new information or to integrate ideas in innovative ways', Linh only succeeded in meeting this expectation in writing.

However, her writing was mainly done in the ESL class. The home classroom teacher had little opportunity to observe Linh during writing time. When I inquired about Linh's writing, the teacher admitted that she did not know too much about it. In the past two years, Linh's academic achievements have improved greatly, despite the fact that her use of language is so much different from the school expectation - which also seems to be unusual from what Heath has observed.

At the beginning of Grade Four, the home class teacher complained to me several times about how Linh relied too much on her Chinese good friend Lily to interpret for her. The teacher thought that either Linh did not fully understand her instructions or she did not pay enough attention while she gave out instruction for assignments, consequently Linh would always ask Lily to clarify them for her because they both spoke in Chinese afterwards. Hence, the teacher assumed that Linh's slow progress in learning English was due to the fact that she did not hard enough herself but, instead, relied on Lily's interpretation. There were a few times when I observed the child during math period, which was her best subject. She certainly did not seem to be attending to the teacher's instruction and simultaneously she was also fiddling with a piece of scrap paper. At that moment, I formed an impression that she was absent-minded. However I later discovered that she was indeed listening to the teacher because, when another child asked her to clarify some of the teacher's instructions for her, she was able to. If she had not been listening, she would not have been able to do so. She further demonstrated her understanding of the instruction by solving the problems.

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[31] Heath, S.B. 'Sociocultural contexts of language development.' in Beyond Language: Social and Cultural Factors in Schooling Language Minority Students. Los Angeles, Calif.: Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles.

Linh spoke English with an accent, which also misled the teacher in her assessment of her. The teacher said that children who had been attending school for as many years as Linh had should be capable of mastering the language by grade four; but Linh still needed to continue her ESL class at this grade. The teacher thought that, by grade four, the child should have become fluent and been able to speak like a native speaker, that is, with no foreign accent.

However, I think that, as a late-comer, the child might have been very conscious of her foreign status. It seems to me that she had never got rid of her uneasiness at being a new student and still felt uneasy about mingling with other children in the class. Part of the reason might be her personality; but, in truth, going to the ESL class regularly did not help her in terms of encouraging her participation in classroom activities. On the contrary, it seriously reduced her chances of being involved in many major activities, such as writing periods, which always occurred at the time when she went to ESL. By the time she came back to the home classroom, a big event or discussion had just been completed. Whatever the children in the class were talking or laughing about, Linh was unable to share the experience with them, which alienated her even more from the class and her peers.

One of the assessments initiated by the research project was to ask the teacher to score the students' oral language. using an instrument called SOLOM (Student Oral Language Observation Matrix). The scores range from one to five. The highest figure is the best. Linh was scored 1 for the category Curriculum-social fluency, for which the description is 'Speech is so halting and fragmentary as to make verbal classroom participation virtually impossible.' The teacher also scored Linh low in the comprehension and grammar categories. On the other hand, Linh received high scores for Math Concept, except for the category of creativity, for which the description is 'student imitates the solutions to problems provided by others.' The highest score Linh received in the math concept was for 'perseverance- student completes all tasks.' When the teacher was asked to rank all the children in the class (in this case, one is considered the best), she ranked Linh eleventh out of the twenty children and fifth out of the six project children in that class. This shows that the teacher thought Linh's academic achievement was below the class average.

In addition to the teacher's assessment, the research project conducted a separate assessment on math and reading. In the math computation task, Linh's score was third - only one mark behind the child in second place. In the math word problems task she scored in second place. In oral reading, her score was the lowest one among the six project children in the class, but she scored highest in recall for silent reading comprehension. In answering inference questions in the same reading comprehension task, she also scored highest and was much higher than the child in second place. The comments the researcher made regarding Linh's performance during the completion of the task were: 'Linh was a serious, independent worker; her reading was fluent and without errors. Read passage B fluently and without errors but slowly...' 'Reading comprehension: Linh answered the comprehension questions slowly and sometimes needed nudging and prodding to answer. Occasionally she wouldn't answer or talk. Despite this behaviour, she did well, scoring perfect on the recall questions for passages I through VI, her only errors being on the two VII passages. On the inference questions she also did well scoring the highest in her class.'

Apart from the linguistic mismatch, the cultural difference vividly demonstrates a gap between home and school expectations. From the interview with Linh's mother, it can be seen that she was a traditional Chinese mother, whose comments about her child were so humble that it made one think the child was incapable and uncooperative. As a new immigrant, she also revealed her innocence and distrust of the new culture (e.g. avoid seeing a western doctor, her reaction to the word 'proud').

From the various observations made by the researchers and from interviews with the teachers, two rather different pictures of Linh emerge. The researcher's general view of Linh was that she was a 'serious, independent worker'. However, in the teacher's view, she was 'unhappy and was reluctant to begin'; also, she 'relies on Lily too much'[32] or 'must express her own ideas and become more self-reliant'.[33]

Heath claims that language learning is cultural learning. It is popularly believed that when children go to school, language learning is a natural process of growth, that is, children will learn the language by interacting with native-speaking peers after a certain length of time. This notion is being gradually modified by researchers who have engaged in the study of schooling language minority children[34] . They find that the failure to acquire literacy skills in school by certain language minority children is the result of the differences in the cultural norms and language use.

For example, Heath (op. cit.)introduces six categories of language genres that schools expect all children to have learned before they begin their formal schooling. They are: Label quests; Meaning quests; Recounts; Accounts; Eventcasts; Stories. Heath remarks that the students who 'achieve academic success either bring to school all of these language uses, and the cultural norms that lie behind them, or they learn quickly to intuit the rules of these language uses for both speaking and learning.' She says that children learning their first language do not merely learn the language itself, they learn how to use the language in a proper social context and behave themselves accordingly. Children from minority language backgrounds often encounter certain difficulties in the transition from home to the mainstream school socially and linguistically.[35]

In my opinion, however it is not always the case that the students 'who achieve academic success bring to school the genres of the language uses or intuit the rules of these language uses for both speaking and learningk;P.' It is possible that some students do not demonstrate these skills in language use and yet still achieve academic success. Linh is an example. However, it is certain that the students who do not bring these genres of language use to school are likely to be misunderstood and underassessed.

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[32] in the report card from the ESL teacher

[33] in the report card from the home class teacher.

[34] Shirley B. Heath 1986; Carlos E. Cortes 1986; Stanley Sue and Amodo Padilla 1986; Bambi B. Schieffelin and Marilyn Cochran-Smith 1984

[35] C. G. Wells; S. B. Heath, (op.cit); J. Cummins.

From the discussion of Linh, it is easy to see the difference between the ways the child uses the English language and the school expectations with respect to language use. Her reticent attitude does not comply with the expectations of the school and the teachers. In addition, her withdrawal from normal class time for ESL classes reinforces this attitude. The fact that she was educated for two years in Hong Kong and lives with a large household of Chinese relatives in Canada seems to make her adherence to her ethnic cultural tradition stronger. Living in the centre of Chinatown, Linh had no extensive interaction with the mainstream institution; hence, she came to school bringing language uses and cultural beliefs that differ greatly from those of the classroom. This made her transition from home to school slower than that of the average child, linguistically and socially. Without being aware of the mismatches between her home and school, one has difficulty in understanding the discrepancies between the teachers' assessment and the child's actual academic achievement. The discussion of the case raises a question that needs to be addressed here - that is - how to identify the mismatch.

It is difficult to detect the mismatch simply by observing children in school. It requires an ethnographic approach, involving a variety of methods, to elicit the essence of the cultural variables. Doing ethnography is now considered an effective approach to understanding people and their culture. Ethnographic research includes several on-site sources of data collection, such as participant observation, field notes, audio and video tapes, relevant site documents and interviews. Spradley (1979) defines an ethnographic interview as a particular kind of speech event which shares many features with the friendly conversation. Ethnographic interviews play a profound role in data collection and require special techniques to achieve their goal. Due to the ethnographic interviews and participant observations, a great deal of information has been explored in the preparation of this paper.

In examining my ethnographic field notes, it is evident that certain aspects of information regarding the observed subjects are insufficient, but emergent patterns or themes are noticeable. A need to fill the information gap emerges. One way is to formulate specific questions from the field notes for the purpose of child and teacher interviews. In addition, prior to this, home interviews were conducted in order to construct a profile for each individual child which includes bibliographic information and household census. It is important to point out that ethnographic interviews are used, not only as a means of testing out hypotheses that are generated from participant observation in classroom settings, but also as a means of bridging ethnographic observation and participation by the ethnographer. The ethnographic approach helps one to see things through the eyes of the respective individuals and so enables one to obtain a better understanding of their culture.

Home-School Relations -

From the discussion of the three Chinese-Canadian children, I want to raise a further issue - that of the importance of home-school relations. Differences in philosophy and ethical values can cause tremendous misunderstanding, especially, in multi-ethnic and multi-lingual schools. When the home-school relationships are well established, the implications are that good communication exists between home and school; the teachers are assumed to have a good understanding of the home background, the needs of the children and the parents' expectations concerning their children's education, and the parents to understand the school policy and the teacher's teaching philosophy.

The Chinese parents are from a background where school is a place in which both knowledge and specific ethical values are taught. At school, the teacher will teach the children to be polite and respect their elders, not to waste food, etc. But the parents are experiencing dissatisfaction and disappointment with the teaching of ethics in the schools in which their children are currently studying. Most of the Chinese parents expressed a wish that their children should learn certain ethical values from school. Linh's mother felt that the fact that Linh had become so rude and reluctant to talk to her was, at least in part, the result of the lack of emphasis on teaching ethical values in the school. As Linh's mother put it, "The teachers here don't teach the children to be kind to the parents; neither would the teachers explain to the children why they should be kind or nice to the parents." Charles' mother remarked, "They don't teach these ethical values at school, only in the church can you get them. That's why I want Charles to go to the church." Another child's mother indicated, "I don't understand why the teachers don't teach these things. It would be nice if they do because children are good at listening to the teachers." A smiliar view was also expressed by other Chinese parents that I interviewed.

The Chinese parents that were involved in the research project expressed general viewpoints during the interviews about what they hoped the school would have taught their children. One particular issue that concerned the majority of the Chinese parents was the setting of homework. Almost without exception, they felt that their children should be given work to do at home that would allow them to review what they had been learning at school. For example, six of the Chinese parents thought that children should have homework; only Linh's mother replied 'I don't know'.

When the topic of homework is brought up , it is a serious issue. For homework demands that teachers use their own time to correct the homework after it has been done, which is in conflict with the reality that teachers also have their private life to go back to after school. Furthermore, the teachers feel homework should not be limited to seatwork and the parents should not use homework as a way of keeping their children from the television screen. Assigning homework, to some of the teachers, means that the teachers are asked to extend their supervision of the children to their homes. The staff in the school are trying to change the popular concept of homework. They try to tell the parents that taking a couple of pieces of paper home and doing them over in a quiet corner somewhere is not the only way to do homework. The teachers try to encourage 'parent's involvement, such as watching television together with the children, followed by discussion. That's to be homework,' as one of the teachers explained. Another teacher also commented on homework, saying 'it is wonderful for parents to give some quality time to their children and to me that is homework. Homework for me is a small amount of time but good quality time, intense time that a parent spends with a child, whatever tasks they choose to do. If there is an involvement and this is the kind of homework that is valued in primary grades, I don't see value in pushing a kid in the corner and mother is watching TV, or father, because they are too tired. I am not putting the parents down.

They are very tired, they work very hard.'

The arguments from the teachers' perspective are valid and ideal. However, in reality, most of the parents are not merely asking for homework for the sake of keeping their children from the television. The parents who are concerned about their children's education feel that having homework is an effective way to help the children review what they have learned in school.

The parents want to have a way to know about what their children have learned in school and find that assigning homework is a way in which the children can either develop further inquiry with the parents or raise questions to the parents that they have not been able to ask in school. Math seems to be a subject with which some of the Chinese parents feel confident in providing assistance; however, a concern was raised about math, that is, there is no homework, there is no immediate way to find out what their children have learned.

Some older children would bring textbooks home to ask the parents about certain matters that they were not clear about. The parents, especially the immigrant parents who are not familiar with the school system, felt confused in dealing with the follow-up homework. Some parents felt that the older graders were given homework, but the correction was done in a whole class situation, that is, the teacher wrote the answer on the blackboard and the children checked their own answers against it. The question that concerned the parents was how a teacher could know what kinds of mistakes their children had made. As a result of this, the progress of the children seemed to be slow and limited, from the parent's point of view.

These comments are from knowledgable parents who are able to help their children with school work, but there are other parents who do not have the knowledge to communicate with the children regarding their school work, let alone the ability to help them do homework. It is not a simple matter, as the teacher put it, 'to give some quality time to their children.' In general, parents love and care about their children and are anxious to see their children progress in learning. They are giving quality time to their children by showing love and support but they are confused and unable to achieve the goal of helping the children do school work at home. The following is a parent's comment about homework:

Parent:	Yes. Having homework makes the children to write more to practice more, otherwise the children would not remember what they have learned in school. The types of homework should be the ones that the teacher instructs in school. When the children come home to review again, they will learn more. I feel that people in here who study grade 1 or 2, or even junior/high school study less than the people in China. The same graduates from junior/high school from China have higher academic standards than the graduates here (in Canada), for example, math. The Chinese are excellent in math, but the bosses here, including the Canadian born Chinese children seem not to know how to calculate. It is strange. The science is highly developed here but it is only centered around a few top professors. In China, it is more averagely and widely spread among the graduates from high schools; but in here, there are only a couple of students that are good, mostly the graduates are very low. This is what I feel.[36]

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[36] Home work - translation of home interview of Ben's parents, Tape #569, A side, Sept 17/86

The above excerpt is only one parent's notion of homework and expectations of education, but it coincides with that of the majority of the Chinese parents. Different understandings and expectations about homework between parents and teachers create a barrier to development in learning for children either at home or at school. Their educational expectations also reinforce Chinese parents' demands for homework. There is no single answer as to how to resolve the problem of assigning or not assigning homework. The paramount issue is: how can a teacher help the parents understand the school's perspective on homework and how can parents communicate their concern to the teachers about their children's academic progress?

Conclusion

In conclusion, I want to reiterate the importance of the learning opportunities that school provides, as well as the importance of continuity between home and school.

It is certain that knowing the culture of others offers the possibility of expanding the abilities of all groups to 'create and learn new information and to adjust and adapt to new circumstances.'[37] By and large, the three Chinese-Canadian children who are the subjects of this case-study are from a similar background, culturally and linguistically; but Ben and Charles were both born here and have long been exposed to Canadian culture and the English language. This implies that their transition from home to school was made less abruptly. Among the three Chinese-Canadian children, we see differences in the children themselves and in their home backgrounds. Regardless of the differences in their home environments, these children are learning to adjust to the school environment gradually. Linh is the least advanced child in terms of her transition from home to school. Compared to the other two children, Linh's two-year education in kindergarten in Hong Kong reinforces her difficulty in making the transition. "Children who feel, or who are made to feel, unaccepted and incompetent may be slow to recover their self-confidence," as Wells indicates, "as a result, their ability to benefit from the enlarged opportunities for learning that school provides may be diminished or even, in exteme cases, irrevocably damaged."[38] Fortunately, Linh has successfully adjusted herself to school life and her academic achievements have finally been recognized before her graduation from the elementary school.

Owing to the language barrier, time constraints, and cultural alienation, most minority-language parents confine their involvement with the school to parent-teacher interviews at report-card time. To understand the differences in the minority children's home background definitely will take much effort on the part of the educators. Many teachers tend to try to reeducate the minority parents, advising them how to interact with their children by making certain suggestions, such as reading to the children, inquiring about their school work, expanding their life experiences by increasing family outings, and involving them in different types of activities at home.

However, in this respect, I agree with Heath, who holds a significant and realistic viewpoint on educating minority parents. She asserts that to teach parents how to raise their children so they will be linguistically prepared for school has relatively little chance of achieving success. She indicates that 'trying to impose external values on preschool home life is not likely to bring any significant internal change to families'.[39] The home's expectation of learning and education is often very different from the teachers', especially for those schools that are situated in multi-cultural and multilingual environments. It makes more sense for the teachers to try to learn and to understand their children in order to help the children make their transition from home to the school confidently.

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[37] Heath, S.B. 'Sociocultural contexts of language development.' in Beyond Language: Social and Cultural Factors in Schooling Language Minority Students. Los Angeles, Calif.: Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles.

[38] Wells, Gordon. The Making Makers: Children Learning language and Using Language to Learn. p. 68

Many teachers do not speak the ethnic community languages and it is not realistic to expect a teacher to speak all the languages of the children in her classroom. It seems to me that the policy makers should involve more people from different ethnic groups to work in schools and, by means of the direct contact with these minority staff, one can hope that the teachers and the schools could become better informed and the mismatch would be minimized. Schooling is to provide every child with learning opportunities; and ultimately, as Wells remarks, it is the teacher's responsibility to discover what the child's competencies are and to help each child to extend and develop them.[40]

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[39] Heath, S.B. op. cit.

[40] Wells, Gordon. The Meaning Makers. p. 69

GROWING IN A GREENHOUSE:

THE EXPERIENCE OF A CHINESE-CANADIAN BOY

Alice Huynh

Introduction

My case study is of an 8-year-old Canadian born Chinese boy, Jee Sing Yau. There are many reasons why I want to write about him. A teacher's comment that he was "born in Canada and yet has problems with the English language" interests me. I am also intrigued by how Jee Sing perceives himself: "I'm not good in reading (in English) because I don't recognize words that much...I'm a bad writer too...I can print easy words, but I can't print harder words...I don't speak Chinese that good either...I always get things (Chinese and English) mixed up."

For Mrs.Yau, Jee Sing's mother, there is another dilemma: "I know Jee Sing has problems in spelling...His teacher said get him to read lots of books, so I sent him to the public library at least once a week, and I saw him read...but his spelling isn't improving... Could it be because he speaks too much Chinese?...But I don't want him to stop learning Chinese!"

Why does Jee Sing have problems in English? Why does he perceive himself to be a failure? Most research conducted in the late 1970s and the 1980s shows that bilingualism is positively correlated with cognitive development and academic performance. But what does bilingualism (i.e. English and Chinese) mean to the public -- Jee Sing's parents and teachers and himself? Many people are convinced that the maintenance of one's first language will not interfere with the learning of a second language, yet there are also those who doubt it. Those who are uncertain are in the majority. These views are very diverse and, undoubtedly, this diversity has its impact on children's experience as learners of a second language.

In this report, through the description of the classroom experiences of Jee Sing, I will raise some important issues concerning the teaching of children from minority ethnolinguistic backgrounds, and describe how bilingualism is interpreted by some people and how this, in turn, impacts on children. First, however, I will introduce Jee Sing's family and discuss how he is perceived by his parents. Then, from a researcher's perspective, I will describe some of Jee Sing's characteristics and his Chinese proficiency. How teachers perceive his social and language skills will then be presented, which will lead to a discussion of different perceptions of his English language development -- the teachers', the researcher's, and the child's. Finally, I shall consider what sort of program might be most beneficial for students like Jee Sing.

Jee Sing's family

I first got to know Jee Sing through a family interview at his maternal grandmother's home, which is located in the heart of Chinatown. Mrs. Siu Yau, Jee Sing's mother, had just given birth to his youngest sister a half month earlier, and planned to stay with her mother until the baby became "full moon" (one-month-old). The house was filled with the aroma of chicken cooked with ginger and wine, a traditional dish that is believed to dispel the wind from a woman's body after she has delivered a baby.[1] Even though Mrs. Yau had just left the hospital one week earlier, it did not take her long to accept the invitation to be interviewed because it pertained to Jee Sing's education.

The Yaus operate a grocery store in Chinatown. Mr. Yang Yau, Jee Sing's father, was brought up in South America and immigrated to Canada with his parents and a young brother fifteen years ago. The family worked for 12 hours a day in the hope that they could have a better life here. Then both Mr. Yau and his brother got married, and the number of the Yau family grew bigger and bigger, from 4 to 13. Despite the large number of individuals living in the same household, the Yaus have always worked and lived together. In 1978 and 1984 respectively, both Mr. Yau's and his brother's in-laws also immigrated to Toronto. At times, as Mrs. Yau said, "an accurate count of all family members is impossible because you really need to sit down and think carefully."

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[1] It is also a Chinese tradition that a woman who has just delivered a child is not supposed to bathe, to wash her hair or to leave her house before the child becomes one month old.

Mr. and Mrs. Yau play different roles in their children's education. Mr. Yau was educated in Trinidad; therefore, his command of English is much better than that of his wife, who received her education in Hong Kong. Naturally, Mr. Yau assumes most of the responsibilities in checking his children's school work. Reading with his children is also his duty even though his time for them is very limited. However, neither does Mrs. Yau have much time to spend with Jee Sing and his 14-year-old sister Kun and 12-year-old brother Ngigh. Therefore, the couple has to depend on Kun and Ngigh to keep track of Jee Sing's study. Nevertheless, through conversations with her children in the store while cleaning and packing vegetables in the storage room, or standing behind the cash register, Mrs. Yau knows what project Jee Sing is working on in a particular subject, or how he feels about certain teachers. She also ensures that children make frequent visits to the local public library in the belief that "they won't waste time there". Attending the parent interview, which is held once a year, is another of Mrs. Yau's duties. Through the interview and sometimes through her customers she gets to know some of the parents of Jee Sing's classmates, from whom sometimes she finds out that "teacher A is better than teacher B". It was also through this informal contact with other parents that Mrs. Yau once made Jee Sing change school.

Mrs. Yau spoke about Jee Sing with pride and confidence: "He is intelligent and very mature. He said he would study hard, make a lot of money, and look after my mother, my husband and myself when we get old." She did not want to think about how valid the statement would be when Jee Sing grew up, but she was very impressed by his thoughtfulness; after all, he was only an 8-year-old child. Since both Mr. and Mrs. Yau themselves only received 9 years of education, they would like their children to study as much as they can and get a university degree if possible. Financial assistance was considered to be one of the life-time commitments they would make to their children.

Throughout the interview, Mrs. Yau's mother hardly joined in the conversation between her daughter and myself. She was occupied with the preparation of food for her daughter, changing the baby's diapers, cuddling the baby when she cried, and handing some tissues over to her daughter who kept on sweating because all windows in the house were closed so that she would not catch a cold. Meanwhile, she did not forget about my presence; she offered me twice the chicken cooked with ginger and wine, and occasionally sat down and listened to our conversation, smiling and nodding. Having finished the interview, I could not help myself from constantly thinking about the restless woman, and imagining that Mrs. Yau was carefully planting the seeds of love that she received from her mother. Jee Sing, being one of the plants protected by the gardeners in the Yau's Greenhouse, seems to be growing healthly and flourishing. The dish of chicken cooked with ginger and wine has since reminded me of Jee Sing and his family.

Personality

Ten days after I visited Jee Sing's family, I met him in his classroom. It was September 29, 1986. My first impression of him was that he was an active participant in the class. The following extracts taken from my notes describe these characteristics:

"Jee Sing sits quietly and listens. He seems to be engrossed";

"Jee Sing puts up his hand as the teacher asks pupils what interested them the most in the early presentation";

He was also very conscientious and obedient:

"Jee Sing returns to his home class from ESL. When he walks in, some people have already cleaned up their desks and are on their way home.

Jee Sing: What do we have to do (now)? (asking T, who is supervising some pupils cleaning up. T who probably has not heard him, does not respond.)
Hey! (grabs Andrew who passes by him)
Andrew: I don't know!
Teacher: Okay now. See over there, Betty?
Could you help cleaning up over there? (talks to Betty. Jee Sing waits beside T to get his attention.)

Betty: Yes.
Teacher: Right over there. ** that thing where our plants are. Move the table. Somebody helps Betty cleaning up the room there.
Jee Sing: What_ What do we do when we're_
Teacher: Pick the papers up! (not clear whom he is addressing)
Jee Sing: Erh (grouchy; seems not to be happy about it, but picks up the papers anyway)
Teacher: Good idea! Pick the chair up!
Jee Sing: That's not my fault! (says softly; picks up the chair, then puts his things away and goes home)

Jee Sing often volunteered to answer the teacher's questions in class discussion, but was not always chosen to speak. Under these circumstances, he either kept silent or,as some children did, yelled out the answer, which sometimes left me with an impression that he just wanted to get everybody's attention. For example, in the dicussion of how to research whether a river actually existed 100 years ago, when a student suggests reading books, along with Sarah who called out "dictionary" to be a sort of book, Jee Sing proposed "Bible". As a result, some people burst into a laugh, and Jee Sing grinned at those who gave him a puzzled look.

My second and third intensive observations of Jee Sing on January 15 and April 2, 1987 confirmed the above description of Jee Sing's characteristics:

"As soon as Jee Sing returns from recess, he sits down and starts writing journal; it looks as if he has thought about what to write during the recess. Most pupils chat while Jee Sing is busily writing."

"Jee Sing hands in his journal. He goes back to his desk and takes out the speller. He reads the instruction on the chalkboard, then asks Lynda what they are supposed to do. Lynda says she doesn't know. Jee Sing reads out loud the second question of section C again. It seems that the second reading could help him understand what to do."

"Jee Sing takes his math exercise book with him and heads for the ESL class. I ask him why he takes it. He says, 'I'll work on it when I have the time.'"

I noticed that Jee Sing was very responsible too:

"We are in the school library. Jee Sing flips through a picture book entitled The

Berenstain Bears' New Baby. It is an old book and some of the pages start to come off...The bell rings. It's almost home time. I asked him whether he would sign it out. He said,

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"Yeah...
Nah (=No) forget it!
They'll think I'm broke it.(=They'll think I broke it.)
Because it's broke (=broken) when I found it."
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Being blamed for ripping a book was obviously something Jee Sing tried to avoid. But if he had really wanted to borrow it, he could have stapled it himself, or explained to the librarian when returning it. However, he chose not to borrow anything, which I interpreted as an avoidance of confrontation. This interpretation became more valid in the interview that I had with him on May 27, 1987. During our discussion of what he understood by being a good reader, Jee Sing said one of the reasons that he did not read a book daily was because he did not have a public library card; it was damaged when he had his pants washed. He thought since it was his fault, the librarian would not issue a new one to him because the old one was not expired yet. But even if he went to the library, "she (the librarian) won't believe me anyway." said Jee Sing. He would rather not have a new card issued.

As far as socializing was concerned, Jee Sing was friendly to everybody, and was generally accepted by his classmates. However, he did not have any particular good friends to play with either inside or outside the class. When he was assigned to play with a group of children, as I saw happening on many occasions in November 1986, February 1987 and May 1987, he was either an observer or played by himself. But he appeared to enjoy being accompanied by somebody when he was reading instructions and writing. My reports on January 15, 1987 and on April 2, 1987 provide detailed accounts of this observation. I will return to this topic in the Language Development section later in this paper.

Chinese proficiency

Jee Sing is being brought up in an environment where Hakka[2] and Cantonese are frequently spoken. At home, because both Mr. and Mrs. Yau speak the same dialect, it is Hakka that the Yaus use to communicate. But outside the home context, Cantonese is used more frequently because it is the dialect most commonly used in the Chinese community. Therefore, at the age of 2, thanks to the grocery store that the Yaus operated, Jee Sing was already a 'bilingual' child, as he could use Hakka effectively and understand Cantonese.

Hakka has remained the dominant language spoken among the siblings ever since Jee Sing entered school, where he began to learn his third language - English. Yet when he plays with his young cousins, who also speak Hakka fluently, English is used most of the time both in the school and family contexts.[3] English is also the language being used between his Chinese friends and himself.[4] When asked why he speaks two different languages with these people, Jee Sing said, "I don't know!...You know, we (my cousins and myself) don't speak Chinese; we only speak Hakka...I don't feel like talking Chinese to my friends at school." Eddie, his cousin, said, "Well, I like to talk English. I only talk Chinese (Hakka) at home." Jee Sing's response suggests that Hakka is considered to be a language that does not belong to the 'Chinese' family, and as a result, he is shy to speak it in front of his Chinese friends. Eddie's reply, on the other hand, indicates that there is a social pressure to speak English because it is the language spoken in school.

Among the Chinese students, espcially among those who attended the E.S.L. Program, Cantonese was spoken frequently. In these circumstances, Jee Sing seldom joined in. He participated in their conversations in a silent way, by listening and sometimes laughing together with his friends when they told jokes. The only occasion when he spoke Cantonese was when translating for Mr. Lewis, who wanted to tell something to Keung, who was a newly arrived immigrant from China. Nevertheless, Jee Sing sometimes even needed Nelson's help in translating. For example, in the observation dated April 3, 1987, I noticed that "he speaks Cantonese in phrases", and that he did not know how to say 'school' and 'to kick ball' in Cantonese. On May 27, 1987, I observed Jee Sing engaging in a constructional activity with Keung and a group of English-speaking children. Because there were no other Chinese students around, he was forced to explain the construction procedures to Keung. My record of his Cantonese speaking ability was as follows: "This is the first time that I hear Jee Sing speaking in Cantonese in full sentences. He stutters and seems to search for words. He is not very fluent, and often cannot make himself understood. He has an accent which is quite distinguishable. But he tries hard, and has got the correct intonation." In the same observation, I witnessed him approaching Nelson for assitance in saying 'hundred' and 'thousand' in Cantonese.

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[2] a Chinese dialect spoken in a county in the province of Canton

[3] His cousins go to the same school and, incidentally, one of them is also in the Language and Learning Project.

[4] In the Grade Three class, 40 percent of the students is native speakers of Chinese, and in Grade Four, 43 percent is Chinese.

When Jee Sing was 6 years old, he was sent to the Chinese Heritage Language Program which was held twice a week with 75 minutes in each session. In the heritage language class, Jee Sing said he was "forced" to speak Cantonese and to learn the Chinese written language. Like many children enrolling in the heritage language program, he did not like it at all. He said, "I don't like to talk Cantonese...I hate Chinese writing!...You have to be quiet in the class and do work. You learn Chinese lessons and practice handwriting, and sometimes your teacher reads a story to you...You learn Chinese there, and that's all. You can't even talk English!" In June 1988, his Chinese teacher commented that he was "quite talented" yet his "attention span was poor which had certain effect on his studying".

On June 14, 1988, I assessed Jee Sing's Chinese language skills, taking his ability to comprehend and to speak both Cantonese and Hakka into consideration.[5] The listening task was divided into two parts, the first being listening to a passage read in the written language, and the second being listening to the same passage read in the spoken mode. Both tasks were conducted in Cantonese. When asked to retell what he had listened to, Jee Sing was able to say that the passage was "something about a dog and a bone", but he did not know other details, which was a common phenomenon shared by other Chinese students in the same grade cohort. But having listened to the passage read in the spoken mode, he showed that his Cantonese listening skill was quite satisfactory for he remembered most of the details.

In speaking, his Cantonese was rated considerably below Hakka for two reasons: there were a number of words he did not know how to say in Cantonese, and more importantly, he responded more quickly when speaking in Hakka and seemed to be more at ease. Nevertheless, he did not use any of the Chinese dialects to retell the story, and often used English to answer my questions posed in Cantonese.

His reading skill was satisfactory. He recognized many function words, and was able to read aloud fluently most of what he had learned in the heritage language class.[6] As far as writing skill was concerned, it appeared that this was what Jee Sing needed to improve the most.[7] He could write his last name and part of his first and middle names. In addition, he could also write numbers and a few words such as "mouth, sky, small" which have less than four strokes. As I continued to dictate words that I felt he should be able to write, he refused to perform the assessment and said (in English): "I'm not got in writing (spelling), just like in English!" Indeed, as will be discussed later in this report, he does seem to have some problems in English.

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[5] Fortunately, because I am a native speaker of Hakka, I was able to carry out the assessment in the two dialects. However, the assessment of his Hakka proficiency was conducted in a much more informal way than that of Cantonese because the Hakka assessment instrument was not available.

[6] Whether he could read and understand other passages was unclear because neither I nor Mei Lain Lam, a member of the research team, could locate any expressive passage written in simple Chinese.

[7] Being able to remember Chinese characters by heart, and to write them correctly according to the right strokes, are considered to be the essential writing skills which must be mastered in the first few years of the learning of Chinese. There is no such term as 'invented spelling' in Cantonese. Many Chinese believe that the exercises of 'making sentences' and 'writing compositions' cannot be carried out until certain levels are reached or sets of vocabulary are mastered. However, as Mei Lian has demonstrated, it is possible to promote 'invented spelling' in the Chinese (Mandarin) heritage language program in order to encourage students to be more creative. The main strategy is to ask students to write down the Mandarin phonetic symbols. Nevertheless, I doubt that the 'invented spelling' practice can be promoted in the Cantonese program because there are no Cantonese phonetic symbols. As a result, both Mei Lian and I agreed that being able to write one's full name, to write some function words, and to follow strokes correctly would be scored 'satisfactory'.

For Jee Sing, having to maintain Chinese (Cantonese or Hakka) and to "do well" in English is a "burden". He had reached to a point where he "was very confused". He said, "I used to speak Hakka and then my father and mother yell at me and go, 'Why don't you speak English?'...They want me to practice English so my English mark will get better...But now they want us to speak more Chinese (Hakka) because we don't speak it anymore. I forgot all the things anyway...I sometimes try to speak Hakka, but I'd stutter. So I just keep on calming down, and then I start speaking English." In the June 1988 Child Interview, he indicated a preference of reading and writing in English despite of the fact that he had many problems in the language; the reason was simply because "I know English better."

At school

Social and Academic Skills

Jee Sing seems to have always been conscientious ever since he entered school. His junior kindergarten teacher commented on the Student Achievement Form that he was "happy and eager to share his experiences with teacher." When he was in senior kindergarten, "he was participating in all activities without the coaching and individual encouragement once needed." His Grade One teacher described him as "an active and willing participant in all activities." Regarding his learning attitude, "it has always been positive and he has always been eager to investigate everything in the world around him. Jee Sing remains a responsible, self-reliant student...is very creative with art materials." When Jee Sing was promoted to Grade Two, the teacher commented that he was "a hard working, conscientious student, making an effort everyday to complete all his assignments...is very curious and likes to investigate new things." His Grade

Three and Four teachers described him as a "Hard working, enthusiastic and conscientious" student. All in all, these comments were very positive and encouraging. Jee Sing's parents were happy because "he's on the right track."

Nevertheless, Jee Sing was perceived differently by Mrs.Rose, his ESL teacher. In the June 1986 report, she described his behaviour as being "questionable at times...He needs to calm down and then he may show his true potential." In the December 1986 report, she pointed out that "following an intensive two and a half weeks working on developing comprehension skills, Jee Sing has learned that he can do many things which he was not even willing to attempt." These statements were significantly different from those by other teachers. They indicated that Jee Sing had some displine problems, and that he was reluctant to try things out.

Did Jee Sing actually behave differently when he was in the ESL class? And if so, why? What made him act differently? Could it be the different classroom environments, the expectations of his teachers, or their teaching approaches that affected him? Or was it more related to how Jee Sing himself, his friends and his family, perceived the ESL program? Jee Sing's statement that "I hate to go to ESL!" suggested that there must have been something that he encountered that he did not enjoy; consequently, it was reflected in his behaviour.

As far as the frequency of his participation is concerned, based on my observations of Jee Sing in both the regular class and the ESL class in September 1986 and in April 1987, there seemed to be no differences. In fact, as part of a group of five students, he had many more opportunities to speak in the ESL class, regardless of whether he wanted to volunteer or not. Mrs. Rose, the ESL teacher, created many opportunities for the group to interact. She seldom interrupted their conversation, and sometimes even helped them express themselves by paraphrasing what they intended to say. But in an activity such as having students answer story comprehension questions orally, which I saw happening many times in this ESL class, students were constantly interrupted because of the grammatical mistakes that they made. For example, when Jee Sing left out the plural marker -s in the sentence "the man showed the people how to grow apples", she corrected him by repeating part of the sentence and raising her tone: "How to grow - ?" Jee Sing was then expected to correct himself.

That a student is given a chance to correct his grammar is a common practice in a language learning setting such as in the Extended or the Core French program. Moreover, because Mrs. Rose corrected everybody's mistakes, it did not seem that Jee Sing's "discipline problems" and his unwillingness to try things out were related to the ESL program. However, the connection between his unwillingness and his poorly developing comprehension skills, which was pointed out by Mrs. Rose, did suggest that his problem had something to do with his reading skills. I shall discuss this subject in the following section.

Language development -- English

Jee Sing started school with no English at all. His junior kindergarten teacher commented that his "vocabulary is limited to naming familiar objects at centres and in books." He also lacked confidence in "initiating communcations and speaking in English". By Senior Kindergarten, "he has acquired sufficient vocabulary to enable him to speak in simple sentences...can print names and copy words from charts onto his pictures". When he was promoted to Grade One, his teacher found that, in reading, "his decoding skills are a little weak...He is a little hesitant about working new words out independently but is able to phonetically sound out most new words...(However) his writing has shown excellent progress....and his speaking skills have also grown as has his English vocabulary." By the end of Grade One, he "almost reached a Grade Two reading level." His lack of vocabulary continued to present a problem at the end of Grade Two. Nevertheless, it did not hinder his progress in all areas of language. The following were the comments of his Grade Two teacher: "Jee Sing reads fluently close to a grade three level...and his comprehension is quite good...He is able to express his ideas clearly but he does still have some difficulty using tenses, plurals and pronouns...He is spelling many words conventionally...His spoken language has improved a great deal."

How Jee Sing's English language proficiency developed in Grades Three and Four was not recorded on the Students Achievement Forms in as much detail as it was in the primary grades. Nevertheless, the general comments on those forms provided me with some insights about how he was perceived. In both the December 1986 and March 1987 reports, Mr. Lewis, Jee Sing's Grade Three teacher, commented that he was reading below grade level, and lacked word-attack and comprehension skills. By the end of Grade Three, his reading level had caught up with the class, and the teacher advised that he should "read as much as he is able to" during the summer. As far as his writing ability was concerned, Mr. Lewis commented that his "creative writing is very good. His stories are interesting and well thought out." Yet "he needs to improve his spelling and sentence structure." During the Teacher Interview held in June 1987, Mr. Lewis further pointed out that Jee Sing "doesn't seem to be over concerned with the fact that he's making a lot of spelling mistakes, which is good...because he can express himself...He's got a lot of feedback from his stories from his classmates and myself that are very positive." As recalled by Mrs. Yau, Mr. Lewis assured her that these problems in spelling and sentence structure "will be overcome eventually if Jee Sing does lots of reading."

As a result, Mrs. Yau assigned Jee Sing's elder brother Ngigh and sister Kun "to be in charge of keeping track of" how many books he read in that summer, and she remembered "vividly the enjoyment of listening to Jee Sing retell what he had read." But sometimes she would get "a little impatient" because Jee Sing could not express himself properly in Chinese. For example, he did not know how to say "invention" and "cashier"; under this circumstance, he used English. Mrs. Yau said jokingly that if she did not push him to attend the Chinese Heritage Language Program, Jee Sing would eventually become a "joke sing"[8]

The Grade Four teacher, Mrs. Smith, commented that Jee Sing's reading and writing were "satisfactory". These comments were based on his performance in relation to the reading level he was at, on how he carried out the reading activities and organized his writing projects, and on whether he was using the English language appropriately. His spelling problems seemed to have been settled because it was recorded in the December 1987 report card that "Jee Sing is working at grade level in spelling." In the same report, he was recommended to "think about the grammar when writing sentences." There were two scores of the spelling test results appearing in the March 1988 report: 30/45 and 50/50. Mrs. Smith rated his spelling ability to be "satisfactory", and commented that "Jee Sing has not done as well this term in the weekly Spelling Dictation". By the end of Grade Four, it was reported that he "has had very good results in all areas of language this year."

Because he submitted his assignments on time, and did not have any "major problems" in both academic performance and behaviour, Mrs. Smith thought that it was "unnecessary" to meet with Jee Sing's parents during the Parent Interview Night. Therefore, Mrs. Yau never met with this teacher, which was an incident that she and her husband were proud of. Jee Sing also expressed his joy: "My mom doesn't need to come because I'm doing good in school."

Nevertheless, the Class Ranking[9] and my interview with Mrs. Smith in June 1988 showed that Jee Sing was not actually performing as satisfactorily as he appeared to be. Out of twenty six children in the class, Jee Sing was ranked the third last. The following is an account of her opinions regarding his reading and writing skills: "His reading is low...But he works hard... Yet, he is insecure...He's very immature (in his writing). He fears short stories. So he'll write four sides of a foolscap and it means nothing...He has difficulty in writing short paragraphs of a story...He doesn't extend thoughts, so that's why it's so short. The idea is there, but he doesn't have the confidence."

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[8] A Chinese expression, its literate translation is "block in both ends" which means "not being good in anything".

[9] At the end of the school year, each teacher in the Language and Learning Project was asked to rank children in the same grade according to their overall academic performance.

In fact, whether students could produce a good story or not was not Mrs. Smith's primary concern. As long as they managed to write down what they wanted to write about, and it was understood, she was satisfied. During the Teacher Interview conducted in June 1988, Mrs. Smith said, "from my 29 years of teaching and all the kids who have come through my classrooms, I can pick of one of the parents was a writer and earns their living from it...It would be nice if a child could write fairly decently." She was more interested in them being "able to writer proper English" because "somebody's got to start to correct them in writing in proper English...(Otherwise,) when are we going to start?" She has noticed that Chinese students, in particular, in addition to the problems that they have in subject-verb agreement, plurals and quotation marks, also have problems with regular and irregular past tense verbs. She "assumes" that these problems are related to their mother tongue because "that's what they heard ... (and) spoke when they learned to speak,...and what they still speak constantly at home ... and with their friends (at school)." Therefore, she wanted to ensure that these problems "were solidly looked after".

How the Chinese speaking students performed academically in the class, and where their problems in spelling derived from were often the topics of conversation among Mrs. Smith and a teacher who had a mixed grades class. Yet these concerns were hardly raised by most teachers who taught the lower grades. Mr. Lewis, for example, never expressed his view regarding the relation between spelling problems and the Chinese students. But he often wondered why some Canadian-born language minority children had problems with the English language.

In fact, regardless of what ethnic background one is from, one has to go through different stages in language development. The performance at each stage should be regarded as part of the sequence of natural development and not as a "problem". Therefore, judgements and opinions such as the ones cited above seem to be unjustified. Do English-speaking children not have spelling problems? Do their story writings not display different stages of development? How is the performance of this group of children interpreted and labelled?

In addition to being assessed by his teachers, Jee Sing was also assessed by members of the project team twice a year. A look at the oral reading assessment results could perhaps help one understand better how he was making progress from another perspective. In November 1986, when in Grade Three, Jee Sing was found to be reading at level 2.3, which meant he was below grade level. Reading assessments were conducted again when he was at the end of Grade Three and the beginning of Grade Four. The scores of 2.2 and 2.5 respectively showed that he had made little progress over the months. By June 1988, when Jee Sing was about to finish Grade Four, he was found to be reading at level 3.5. Although still below grade level, his reading was much improved. As far as the silent reading comprehension assessments were concerned, though, Jee Sing seemed to have great difficulty, as his scores were very low compared with other children involved in the Language and Learning Project.

The comments of Mr. Lewis and Mrs. Smith and the results of the reading assessments raise some questions, which although they specifically relate to Jee Sing, are of more general concern: Why was Jee Sing not making as much progress as he had done in the primary grades? Was it because, as pointed out by his ESL teacher Mrs. Rose, he was not willing to try? Or was it because of some other factors? If so, what were they? Why did Jee Sing perform relatively well on spelling dictations but poorly in free writing? When should the "spelling problem" be tackled? How can a child like Jee Sing be helped to overcome his "problems"? Whose was the responsibility? If Jee Sing's Grade Four teacher had been somebody like Mr. Lewis, who stressed the content of story writing rather than spelling and the structure of English, how would Jee Sing have performed? What is the impact of different teaching styles on unilingual and bilingual children? Studies conducted by Cummins (?1980) indicate that it takes a child five to seven years to master a second language. Jee Sing has had six years of education by the end of grade four, but both the assessment results and the comments of some teachers suggest that he is still performing far below the norm of his grade.

Answers to the above questions could be varied, depending on which stand point one takes. The comments that the teachers made, both in the written and spoken mode, allow one to suggest that, while some may value the progress that children make over a period of time, others may emphasize their current performance. They also allow one to reveal the fact that some prefer a structured program others prefer a flexible one. Whilst each teaching approach offers its unique advantages, it does not necessarily follow that all children will benefit from the same programme. Undoubtedly, individual children have their own ways of responding to the various learning opportunities provided by their teachers too.

Jee Sing Yau is no exception. Perhaps a brief review of how he interacted with texts during the reading and writing periods when he was in Grades Three and Four could help one understand better how he learns and, simultaneously, help one formulate hypotheses about why he has difficulties and to propose which teaching approach would be most advantageous for him.

Jee Sing in class -- reading and writing periods

My notes on January 15, 1987 (when Jee Sing was in Grade Three) read as follows:

"Children are in the school library now. Jee Sing takes out a book randomly from the picture book section. It's called The Berenstain Bears' New Baby. He comes to sit beside me and reads... He reads aloud, word by word...uses a finger to guide him... has difficulties with the word 'fine'. Several attempts are made: 'fit, fin, fat, fin, fun' and finally, he decides 'fun' to be the correct pronunciation. I can't help myself from correcting him ... He comments on a picture in the book... Then he stops over the word 'interesting', reads the word quickly and correctly, but goes back again. tries to read it slowly. He reads 'in. ter. ing' and realizes that there's something wrong. He says to himself, 'I know what word it is, but I can't even pronounce it!'"

That he chose a picture book to read, commented on some of the pictures in the book, and used a finger to guide himself when reading out loud indicated to me that he felt comfortable with books accompanied with pictures, and was more confident in reading this way. The short pauses in trying to figure out how to read 'fine' suggested that he lacked some decoding skills. However, the first successful attempt in reading aloud 'interesting' showed that he actually knew the word but lacked confidence when it came to reading it by analysis and synthesis. Was it necessary to point at a word and to read aloud? This question was posed to Jee Sing, and the answer was an affirmative one. He said, "I point to the word (when I read) because (otherwise) I would lose the space... When I see words that I don't know, I try to sound them out."

Almost eleven months later, I happened to observe Jee Sing in the school library again. It was December 8, 1987: "He is in the picture books section now. His head bends over to one side in order to see what the titles of the books are. Seconds later, he seems to lose interest. He goes to the bookshelves near the library entrance. He looks at the books for a while, then comes back to the picture books section. He takes out two books: He Bear She Bear, and More Riddles. He flips through More Riddles, reads out loud some riddles, looks at the pictures and guesses at some of the riddles."

The habit of reading out loud and looking at picture cues continued. On April 21, 1988, I observed him in the silent reading period: "While everybody is reading their books silently, Jee Sing is reading out loud, word by word ... But nobody seems to be bothered ... He seems to enjoy looking at the pictures; when he turns to the next page, he always looks at the picture first, and sometimes even talks to himself about how funny it looks."

Jee Sing read out loud almost everything: instructions, notes, books, and even his own story writings. There were times when I wondered whether the habit of reading aloud was one of the obstacles which prevented him from being a fluent reader. For example, when I asked him to select his best story for me, he had to read out loud word by word all the stories that he had written before a final decision was made. When asked why he did so, he said, "I forgot what I wrote." He seemed to be unfamiliar with the skimming and scanning strategies. When he read alone and had some problems, he either tried to make sense of it by himself or skipped it. But when he was engaging in reading activities such as working on language worksheets, he often yelled out something like "How do you do number two?" or "What 'loom' mean? (=What does 'loom' mean?)" and expected somebody to answer him. I was often puzzled by the different degrees of patience that he displayed when reading alone and when engaging in reading activities.

An observation on October 23, 1987 is the best example to illustrate this difference. It was the reading activity period. Children were divided into four groups, and each group was to engage in different tasks. Jee Sing's group was to do worksheets:

Jee Sing reads out loud question #1 on the worksheet. It was stated as following: Spotlight is a compound word. It is made from the words (blank) and (blank). Write another new compound word (blank).

Jee Sing: (reads aloud the instruction silently)
I don't get it!
(reads the question out loud) Spotlight is a common (=compound)
word. It is made_ from the word_ (pauses)
Kevin: The words. (corrects Jee Sing)
Jee Sing: The words..and..
(seems to continue reading the instruction silently)
Er_ (comes to me) What is a_
Read all these words up here. (points at the instruction)
(I refuse to help him, and suggest that he work on his own
or with a friend. Jee Sing goes to sit beside Kevin who seems
to have difficulty in understanding the question too...Kevin
made several attempts. He finally figured out what to do.
He explained it to Jee Sing.)

When working with a partner, obviously, Jee Sing was more dependent. One possible explanation of why he behaved in this way could be that the strategy of omitting a word was not applicable because he must recognize and understand certain key words in order to carry out the comprehension exercises. Therefore, he needed the support of peers.

Jee Sing identified three sources of printed materials that he read daily in school: "Books, spelling textbook, and math textbook for problem solving". At home, as he pointed out, "I don't read anything. (But) sometimes I read books when I'm bored." In fact, he could have read more than what he identified. In the school library, where his class went once a week, and in his home classroom, there were printed materials and messages on the chalkboards, signs, charts and posters. In his Grade Four class, there was even a book rack at the back of the room which displayed many old story books. But I hardly saw Jee Sing by the book rack; he was probably not motivated by those "chapter books" because they contained very few pictures.

Jee Sing did not think he was a good reader. During the Child Interview held in May 1987, he said, "I don't recognize words that much, even in the easy books like the grade-1 books... (because when) I went in the library, I went to the kindergarten section." To him, the 'good' reader must be able to read a book "very fast" and understand every word. As pointed out in the introduction of this report, he lacked confidence in himself. It appeared that he knew the only way to improve himself was to do a great deal of reading, but he was reluctant to do so. According to him, it was because his library card was damaged. However, his reluctance may have stemmed from his "laziness", as pointed out by Mr. Lewis and Mrs. Rose, or could have partly derived from his "lack of confidence", as indicated by Mrs. Smith. Yet it could also be a combination of the three. And the fourth, perhaps the most painful and challenging one, was the difficulty that he encountered daily: "Words that I don't understand". He associated this difficulty with the spelling problem that he had; in other words, to him, reading and spelling were interchangeable. This association became very evident in what he said during the June 1988 Child Interview. He said, "reading is good for language and spelling...Bob is the best reader in the class because he reads fast, and he's a good speller." When asked why reading and spelling were related, he replied, "because you need spelling to be in the reading, and you need spelling to be in the book and you read the words." The explanation may not be well expressed, but it was not hard to understand how he related the two. He was frustrated and resentful: "I hate reading!...I'm a bad writer too! I know how to write: I can print easy words, but I can't print harder words. I forgot all my easy words, like 'because' and 'think.'"

In fact, being able to do well in reading and spelling are two different abilities. But Jee Sing treated them as identical, which was also quite understandable because he was dealing with 'words' that he had difficulties with. Therefore, the ways that he dealt with the problems of not understanding a word and not knowing how to spell were similar; he was very persistent. The struggle of trying to spell the word "English" was the best example to illustrate this characteristic (Observation made on January 15, 1987):

Jee Sing is writing journal which assigned topic is to write about a new boy in the class. Students are encouraged to use as many words provided in the Word List in the Speller as possible. There are 'used, useful, Tuesday, cube, huge, tube, hour, does, dry, child, use, cute'.

So far, Jee Sing has written the following: 'One day a new boy came to our class. He don't know any ingatich (=English).' He isn't sure whether 'ingatich is spelled correctly, and is coming to check with me.

Jee Sing: Alice! Is this right? English.
(spells what he wrote) i n g a t i c h.
That's right?
I sounded it out myself.
I_ I got something wrong I think.
Alice: Why do you think it's wrong?
Jee Sing: Is that right first? (=Tell me first whether it's right)
Alice: Okay...(pretends to concentrate, but waits for him to respond)
Jee Sing: Ing ga lish. (says it slowly)
Alice: Very close.
Jee Sing: But well how?
Alice: Very close.
Jee Sing: I am miss a letter? (=Do I miss a letter?)
I add a letter? (=Do I add a letter?)
Alice: Eng_ glish. (breaks the word into two syllables)
Jee Sing: Huh? (=What?)
Alice: Eng_ glish. (repeats)
Jee Sing: I sound it wrong.
Ing ga lish. Oh! Ell! Ell instead of a tee!
Tish! Eng ga lish. Not tish! (erases t and writes l)

Alice: Right!
What about the shuh sound?
Jee Sing: S H (letter name)
Alice: Good!..How do you pronounce C H?
Jee Sing: C H?
cherh. (letter sound)
(erases ch and writes sh)
Alice: Yes.

My frequent observations of Jee Sing during writing periods pointed out that he needed a company when performing almost all kinds of writing tasks, such as journal writing, story writing, problem-solving writing, etc. As long as the task was not mechanically oriented, as in the case of practising penmanship, his voice was always heard; he either verbalized while writing or consulted with somebody about his spelling. This person could be an adult or a child, depending on who was available at the time. When he was in Grade Three, he was frequently seen working closely with a Canadian-born Chinese girl, Lyndia, who sat beside him and was also in the ESL program. They helped each other to read and to understand instructions on the chalkboard, on the worksheets, and in the language and math textbooks. They even helped each other in preparing spelling dictations and environmental tests. In Grade Four, perhaps because every student had to remain in his or her own desk, Jee Sing seemed to be more flexible in selecting people to help him. Usually, he only needed to say out loud his question, then somebody in the class would respond to him.

Obviously, as pointed out by Mrs. Smith, Jee Sing was very insecure. Therefore, he sought for support when carrying out reading and writing activities. Yet he was quite independent in deciding the content of story writings. In the same observation cited earlier, I recorded that "throughout the entire writing period, Lyndia and Jee Sing are helping each other to overcome the spelling problems. He keeps on writing. He only needs a few seconds to reflect on what to write next." Within four minutes, he produced the following piece of writing: "One day a new boy came to our class. he don't know any ingalish. he sit's next to me. his name is keung. bing yiu tilk's care of him. he go's to E.S.L. I thot he never going to spak ingalish." Although at times he was under some constraints such as having to apply words in the Word List to the story writing, he could still manage to produce what he considered to be essential in a story: "You have to begin by something like 'once upon a time'...then in the middle, you get excited...then you get to the end, and it's supposed to be good or bad." Thus the story about the new boy in the class was carried out as follows: "He is a child and he was cute and he was huge. At Tuesday, January 15, 1988 Keung suprise me by he know how to spak ingalish. now we have 28 children in our class."

The compositions that he wrote in Grade Three were mostly quite lengthy, ranging from one to three pages and, as Mr. Lewis said, "(even though) the spelling is out of sight, the stories are probably the best in the class." His journal writings were very "alive"; he wrote about how he felt about his brother, what he thought about an assigned writing project, his haircut and even told jokes. It seemed that he never ran out of ideas. A poem that he wrote was once selected to be the penmanship exercise which everybody in the class had to copy down into their handwriting books. Jee Sing was very proud of it.

But from the day Jee Sing was promoted to Grade Four, as far as the richness of his story writings was concerned, he seemed to change drastically. One could almost sense the boredom growing inside him. In his journals, he wrote: "October 21, 1987. Yesterday I done nothing"; "November 4, 1987. Today I have hickup. Can I tick a drink"; "April 21, 1988. Today I finish reading Who's Afraid of Ernestein"; "May 4, 1988. I'm writing in my Journal and I don't want to but I have to becouse Mrs. Smith told us to." The average length of the journal writings was three to four lines. He did not write much either in the stories of The Haunted House, The Mystery Story and The Spaceship, which were topics assigned by the teacher. In fact, he even lost them, and admitted that he "didn't write any good stories this year". The only two pieces of writing that he was willing to "share with people" were the research projects on Ontario and U.F.O. which scored B+ and A respectively, a grade that he felt "pretty good".

The last time I observed him engaging in writing activities was on June 13. 1988, the day when the class was given a free-choice writing assignment. Jee Sing first wrote about The Monster in only two lines: "One day when I woeke up I saw strang shape shadow. It was just mom holding a dustpan above her head." Then he changed the topic to My Cat because he didn't know what else "to put in the story". The story of My Cat was first begun with a sentence "My cat doesn't live with me now." Then it was changed to "One day my cat bourn 10 kittens. I had to give it all away." Still, he lost his train of thought, and did not know what else to tell. At the end of the free writing period, when almost two thirds of the class submitted their assignment, Jee Sing threw his away. He seemed to be frustrated; he repeatedly said to himself: "I don't know what to write!"

That he wrote short journal entries and no longer enjoyed creative writing indicated that he was not as enthusiastic about writing as he used to be. However, in the Child Interview conducted in June 1988, he expressed his interest in writing, and showed that he had a positive attitude towards it. He said, "I like writing...Writing is good for imagination". Yet, one should also take his persistent lack of confidence in spelling into consideration. As pointed out earlier, the spelling problem had been an issue that Jee Sing himself, his teachers and parents, often discussed. Indeed, in his own view, he never "managed to improve" his spelling skill throughout these years. He was resentful for never being asked to proofread anybody's stories because of his weakness in spelling. When he was in Grade Three, he considered spelling to be the most difficult thing to do in school, and this was still to be the case in Grade Four. When asked how he could overcome the problem, he said, "Reading! Reading! Everyone tells me that. But I hate it! I don't like reading!...because you will see spelling (problem) in reading too!" The more he hated it, the less books he read. Consequently, he chose to write less so that "nobody will know (my problem) anymore."

Discussion

In fact, ever since Jee Sing entered school, his teachers in the early grades did point out that he had difficulties in learning the English language. Yet the difficulties that he encountered were considered to be natural and forgivable, partly because English was not his mother tongue, and partly because he was just beginning to learn it. His every single attempt in using the English language appropriately was credited, and the achievement he reached over a period of time was congratulated. However, as he reached a higher grade, the problems that he used to have were perceived differently. The problem in spelling, in particular, became very threatening. What makes Jee Sing very conscious about his spelling problem is, in my view, the fact that he is placed in a class where the approach of "teaching kids to use proper English" is adopted and emphasized. Mrs. Smith wants "to prepare the kids" because "university professors have been complaining that these kids can't write essays". She also wants to "protect" herself because she does not want to hear something like "what's happening at the lower grades?" And she has strong support from the Grade Five and Six teachers in the school "to go for the basics". Therefore, she deliberately schedules intensive spelling lessons and dictations. In addition, loads of language worksheets are handed to children; the intentions behind them are various: to improve the use of punctuation marks, to expand vocabulary, to enrich language development, to increase linguistic awareness, and so on.

Undoubtedly, the concentration on using "proper English" has its impact on Jee Sing. He is reminded everyday, mostly implicitly, by the various classroom activities, that he is weak in spelling and that he needs to improve his English. This, in turn, prompts the fear of getting "a bad mark" and of "failing school" to grow. But how much help does he really receive from the present educational system? Is the placement in the E.S.L. program a right decision? In light of the various activities that go on in the program and in the regular classroom, it seems that he needs more than language training. That is to say, he needs to learn strategies for applying what he discovers in the learning process. A topic such as how to search for a book at his level, or how to expand one's vocabulary through reading would surely be of benefit to him. Ironically, however, the activities that are intended to improve his language skills produce precisely the reverse effect: he feels more and more insecure, and is more and more afraid to use the language for fear of displaying his weaknesses.

Indeed, it is quite normal for a child like Jee Sing to encounter many difficulties in learning the English language when entering school. When a second language learner makes a mistake in the early years, be it a pronunciation or a grammatical one, he or she is always forgiven. But after being in school for almost six years where English is spoken all the time, the second language learner will be looked upon differently if the mistakes constantly occur. Tolerance of the mistakes that a second language speaker makes becomes very limited. The remark made by Mr. Lewis about Jee Sing being a Canadian born child but having problems in English is an example to illustrate this common phenomenon althought the teacher himself often appears to be very understanding and sympathetic. Another example is the comments made by Mrs. Smith who assumes that, because many language minority children speak their mother tongue "in their own private life" and "there isn't a necessity (on their part) to learn English and to spend more time on it", their English is not as good as their English-speaking counterparts.

By contrast, what they are not aware of, and what many people neglect, is the fact that many language minority children learn English at the cost of losing respect for their mother tongue and some even give up opportunities to learn it. The organization of the heritage language class and the relatively richer resources of the regular program are the two major factors in creating the situation.

Jee Sing is a concrete example to illustrate this phenomenon. He "hates" going to Chinese class because "you don't get to go field trips", because "you have to sit at your desk and don't get to go around the class", and because "you have homework even in the March break too!" Whereas in the English class, there is more flexibility; in the 'silent reading' period, for example, students are allowed to go to the school library to select books. But what the child does in the library is not usually known to the home class teacher because he or she assumes that there is a librarian who will look after the children there. The teaching in the regular program is less structured because students can work at their own individual pace. Yet it is almost impossible to allow students to work at an individual pace in a heritage language class, which is similar to the Core or Extended French Program, in that 'teaching' must be carried out before any task is assigned. The extra effort demanded in the Chinese language learning process makes the learning experience even less pleasant. Consequently, like Jee Sing, many children have negative feelings about the learning of their mother tongue and do not enjoy the program.[10]

Conclusion

Jee Sing grows in a home where plenty of love and support are given by his family members. Academically, he performed well in junior grades, and appeared to become frustrated as he was proceeding to senior. Why is it so? Is it because his enthusiaism and eagerness towards learning have changed? Or is it because some teachers' judgements are unjustified? Which in turn, have great impacts on Jee Sing's self-confidence and academic performance. Perhaps the true answer is a combination of the above two reasons. In light of my two years intensive classroom observations of Jee Sing, and considering the comments made by his parents and teachers, I offer here two possible explanations to why a second language learner such as Jee Sing may become less motivated and drastically change his learning attitudes. First, it is the discrepancy of "achievement" perceived by individual teachers in junior and senior grades. Here, the key word is the evaluation of "performing at a satisfactory level". What is "satisfactory"? When does a child to be said to perform satisfactorily? Obviously, individual teachers measure it by using different sets of standard. To those who support "going for the basic", their standard is significantly along the line of controlled grammar and good sentence structure. But to others, "satisfaction" may be based on the progress that the child has made over a period of time. Variables such as individual's effort and ethnolinguistic background are also taken into consideration. In other words, a child who is assessed by teachers in the latter group will be competed with himself. Jee Sing seems to be more acceptive to this form of evaluation; he is still made aware that he is weak in reading and spelling, but he is encouraged to confront the problems in a much more positive way.

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[10] Of the 9 Chinese students involved in the Language and Learning Project at school B, 66 percent reported to attend the Heritage Language Program in the first Project year. At the end of the Project, the percentage of enrolment in the program was declined to 33.

The second reason pertains to the flexibility in delivering the curriculum. If teachers are allowed to plan their syllabus within the premises, should there be a consensus as to what and when to teach at certain grade levels? In other words, in Jee Sing's case, do all the teachers in the school across the grades agree on whether they will "go for the basic"? If so, will it be implemented in all junior and senior divisions? It is certainly a normal and healthy phenomenon that teachers in the same school have various teaching styles and approaches in reaching the ultimate goal of providing better education to children. Yet the differences in these styles and approaches must be a constructive one which allows students to benefit from. Apparently, Jee Sing does not seem to benefit from the different approaches adopted by his teachers, which brings out two issues that are worth to be reflected upon: There is not enough communication among the teachers, and nor is there a genuine understanding of the process of learning a second language from the teachers' part.

Even though Jee Sing was born and brought up in Canada where English is extensively used in all aspects, he may not necessarily act like an ordinary anglophone Canadian. This is because he grows up in an immigrant family where he learns to speak his heritage language, and is taught sets of value which might be significantly different from the norm. Therefore, one cannot assume that he *should* use English appropriately in a few years time, and that his parents *should* know how to work collaboratively with the school in helping him to overcome some problems. There are thousands of children having different ethnolinguistic backgrounds and being born in Canada enrolled in the Torontonian schools. Surely, placing those children in a withdrawal program such as

ESL is not the best solution. Jee Sing's problems are different from those that are faced by some newly arrived immigrant children in that he can already communicate effectively in English. The kind of ESL training that he needs is more sophisticated and complex. Hence, teachers should be very sensitive to needs of individual children and plan their syllabus accordingly.

As one of the plants in the greenhouse, Jee Sing is undoubtedly being taken care of by his parents. But being protected from storms do not guarantee that the plants will grow healthly; they need proper irrigation from the gardeners as well as the right amount of sunshine. Parents being the gardeners, and teachers being the sunshine, only them work together can make the plants blossom.

THE GREEK-CANADIAN CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE:

A CASE STUDY

Myriam Shechter

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

1989

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PROLOGUE

A grade three class. The teacher gathers the children around her on the floor area and reads them a poem about fighting. An animated discussion ensues, most children have an experience to share with the others. Almost imperceptibly, the teacher directs the discussion towards current events, and reads to the children a few articles from the newspaper: "War feared as Turkish, Greek forces on alert"; "Conflict has 400 year-old roots"; "We're ready to fight, Metro's Greek say". The class, an ethnic mix of speakers of English, Greek, Chinese and Vietnamese, listens in silence. The reading is over and comments pour in.

Ari: Like . the- the Greeks wanted to go like . with a ship into a
. I don't th- I think a Greek . the Greek waters *[1]
or something (rising intonation)
Teacher: Uhuh (=yes)
Ari: And the Turkeys wouldn't let them and-
but . the Turkeys wanted to take away their water .
the Greek water and they started to fight because of that
Teacher: OK
So basically it was *-
..So what do you think it was?
Ari: Jealous
Teacher: On whose part?
Ari: Uh the Turkeys were jealous ..
Teacher: So you are saying that . the Turk- the Turkish people .
the Turks were- were . jealous about- about the Greeks
Ari: The Turks were jealous

Nektaria: My mother told me that . the . Turkish are fighting to get .
the kids over there to be their slaves ...
Teacher: The Turkish are fighting *-
Nektaria: The Greek
Teacher: to get Greek children as slaves
That's what you are saying?
Nektaria: Yeah
That's what my mother told me and then I'm not sure if it's true
Teacher: . You- so that's what's what this fight was all about?
Nektaria: That's what I think
That's what my mother told me

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[1] * is a transcription convention for "word not intelligible".

The parents.

"The school did not offer adequate education for my children. One of my boys had to repeat, because his English was not good enough." (through interpreter)

"The teachers should be more aware of the country of origin of the children, not just test and make decisions based on that." (through interpreter)

"Because he is Greek, they (the teachers) assume that he is dumb." (through interpreter)

"I tried to talk to the principal, made lots of appointments, couldn't get to him. He never answered my calls... The same with the social worker." (through interpreter)

Question: What life-time achievements do you expect of your child? What are your goals for your child's education?

"To become a person with feelings, to respect other people... to have a higher education if possible."

"To go as far as possible if he is clever...Sometimes a university degree does not make a person best for society. I'd like him to be a good worker, to take care of his family."

"At least finish high school...Do the best he is capable of."

"Not to be dependent on her husband."

"I would like her to go to University, to have an easier life."

"To become independent...The sky is the limit."

The children.

Question: What do you want to be when you grow up?

"Usually I want to be a policeman, that's my favourite."

"Artist."

"A nurse or a kindergarten teacher."

"A doctor."

"Pediatric nurse."

"A police officer."

"A corporate lawyer."

"My sister is going to be a psychiatrist, I am going to be her first patient."

Question: What are you, Canadian or Greek?

"Canadian, because I got born here."

"Greek, because my parents are Greek."

"Greek Canadian."

"Greek... no, my parents are Greek. I am Greek Canadian, or Canadian Greek?"

Question: How does it feel to be Greek in a Canadian school?

"Good, because it's in a Greek community... other Greek people here."

"I would do better in school if I would speak English."

"Greek people live close to you, so you can make friends."

"It's good to have 2 languages."

The teachers.

"If we are going to be multicultural, then we must understand each other's cultural backgrounds. But if you take kids out of a classroom to deal with their own particular culture, there is no sharing, and then it's not multicultural."

"The Greek families will tend to kick up a fuss and very much avoid having their kids in split grades."

"One of the problems is that many of our Greek parents felt that there is better education offered in Greece than here; and they didn't think there was enough memory work and enough rote teaching to satisfy their particular needs."

"I know there are changes... because they accepted ... split grades, seen the value of field trips, join us in coming to field trips. We had very few Greek volunteers in the school... we have quite a few now."

"Ethnicity is not a factor in my classroom as far as distinguishing between ability levels. I don't have a Chinese group, or Greek group, or English group... Ethnicity does not seem to be a factor in terms of friendships, or groupings...I don't see ethnicity being a factor socially."

With precocious wisdom, one of the children asked the crucial question: are they Greek Canadian or Canadian Greek? Are they Canadian by birthright or Greek by cultural background? Are they enriched through partaking in two languages and two cultures, or are they losers in the pull between "back home" and the "new country"? Are they singled out, or celebrated?

In order to begin to comprehend the Greek children's experience in the Canadian educational system, let us examine first the community surrounding them, and then look at their school as part of this community. Only then will we be ready to focus on individual experiences and analyze them within the framework of this rich background tapestry of old and new, of tradition and innovation.

INTRODUCTION

This study is the outcome of a three-year period of ethnographic work in a multicultural school. It is embedded within a project of large proportions involving 72 children from four schools, their families, and their teachers.

The twelve children from Greek ethnic background included in this study are grouped in three cohorts.

The first cohort includes 4 native speakers of Greek observed through Senior Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2. (It also includes one native speaker of Chinese and one native speaker of English.)

- one child followed the three consecutive grades.
- one child repeated Grade 1.
- one child left the school towards the end of Year 2 of the project.
- one child joined the study at the beginning of Year 2 and continued through Year 3 of the project.

The second cohort, also with 4 children, was observed through Grades 2, 3 and 4. One of the children was observed in a different school, therefore the cohort in Johnson included only 3 native speakers of Greek (as well as two speakers of English and one of Chinese).

- Two children followed the three consecutive grades.
- One child left at the end of Year 1 of the project and was replaced by another child who continued through Years 2 and 3.
- One child left in the middle of Year 3.

The third cohort, with 4 speakers of Greek within the school, was observed through Grades 4, 5 and 6. (There were as well a speaker of English and one of Chinese, as in the other cohorts.)

- Two children followed the three consecutive grades.
- Two children left at the end of Year 1 and were replaced by two other children who continued through Years 2 and 3 of the project.

All the children from the sample were born in Canada of immigrant parents. With very few exceptions, their parents' education varies from the six obligatory (in Greece) elementary grades to high school. A few of the parents have started or completed technical college. All the children have siblings. They all speak Greek at home, with some English, the amount usually depending on the number of older siblings in the family.

All the children attend or have recently attended Greek school, some at Board-sponsored classes, and others at Community Centres or Church. During the time of the study, three of the four children in the first cohort and one of the children in the second cohort attended ESL classes.

I have undertaken this case study because I wanted to understand what it meant to be a child of Greek ethnic background in the school system: what were the experiences -- positive or otherwise -- of these children and of their parents; how did their presence in the school shape the outlook of the teaching staff on ethnicity and what were the teachers' responses to the needs of these children. I hope that some of the issues discussed in connection with these children will be of relevance both to the Greek Community and to the teaching community, and even that some of them might be applicable to other children from various ethnic backgrounds, their families and their teachers, as they make their way together through the Canadian educational system.

THE COMMUNITY

History

Although by 1871, 39 Greeks were already established in Canada, Greek immigration to North America became significant only around the end of the nineteenth century, as a consequence of rural poverty, overpopulation and frequent wars in Greece. From less than 300 at the turn of the century, the number of Greek immigrants reached 4,000 by the beginning of the First World War, and swelled to over 10,000 at the beginning of the Second World War.

Following the Second World War, between 1946 and 1955, 14,897 new Greek immigrants entered Canada (Canada, Department of Manpower and Immigration, Immigration Statistics, 1972, Ottawa). The numbers increased steadily on: 49,066 between 1956-1965; 54,771 between 1966-1973. During the sixties, the total number of Canadian Greeks rose dramatically, reaching 124,475 in1971. Since then, due to better economic conditions in Greece, there has been a decline in Greek immigration to Canada.

Ontario, and especially the Toronto area, with its concentration of industry, constituted a focal point for immigration: before 1910 there were 200 Greeks in Toronto; by 1942, there were approximately 1,200 (Nagata, 1969). The numbers increased to 3,000 by 1951, 12,500 by 1958, and 35,000 to 40,000 by 1969.

The Toronto Star (May 3, 1975) estimated the total Greek population in Toronto, including second generation Greeks, to be in the vicinity of 70,000. A 1976 Canadian census showed that 53,130 Greek people lived in Metropolitan Toronto; leaders of the Greek Community, however, suggested that these figures were much too low, and estimated the number to be about 77,000. The discrepancy, they explained, was due to the fact that "once Greek immigrants become integrated into Canadian life, (they) do not acknowledge their Greek heritage on the census form". (Hart, 1981)

The largest areas of concentration of Greek immigrants in Toronto include the Danforth-Pape area; Lansdowne to Bathurst area, along Bloor; pockets in the Parliament, Sherbourne, Riverdale and Sumach areas (Maltas, 1974). However, today, with more and more Greeks learning the language and becoming more established, there is a visible movement of the community towards Scarborough, Agincourt and Don Mills.

The 1981 census identifies the Greeks as the fourth largest non-official language group in Metro Toronto, following the Italians, Portuguese and Chinese. In 1981, 31% of Metro Toronto's population with Greek mother tongue were living in Toronto, half of what it was in 1971; another 23% lived in Scarborough; North York contained a further 20%. (Mother Tongue Atlas of Metropolitan Toronto, 1981)

The Danforth

Named after Asa Danforth, an American contractor who cut a road from York to the Trent River in 1799, Danforth Avenue stretches for about 90 blocks from the Don Valley in the west to Kingston Road in the east; the area generally referred to as "The

Danforth" covers loosely the territory between Broadview and Pape. Although affectionally referred to as "Little Athens". The Danforth and the Greek Community of Toronto share a rather recent common history.

The Greek-speaking people of this area came mostly in two waves of immigration over the last 60 years. A first group, around 1910-1912, settled into the Don district, east of Yonge street. The community grew around their first Greek Orthodox Church, established in 1912 at 170 Jarvis street, a centre for religious as well as cultural and social activities. After the war, with a new wave of immigration, the community began to shift eastward along Danforth Avenue and into the suburbs.

Danforth Avenue started as a dirt road around 1799; it soon became a favourite week-end outing for Toronto inhabitants, who crossed a wooden bridge over the Don River. Some homes started to appear in the thick woods of the area which, by the beginning of the twentieth century, became a neighbourhood of market gardens, farms, brickyards, factories, with a population of mostly English, Scots and Irish. A few wealthy families settled in the area as well, among them the Johnsons, who were almost singlehandedly responsible for the "ancestor" of today's Johnson Community School.

From a community virtually isolated "on the other side of the river", the Danforth area entered an era of spectacular growth, once the Viaduct over the Don River was built and a through, crosstown streetcar service with free transfer privileges began along Bloor and Danforth. By 1930, the retail strip along the Danforth was fully developed all the way to Victoria Park.

Practically up to the 1950s, the Danforth district population remained overwhelmingly of British Isles origin: the 1951 census shows 83.5%. Ten years later, the British population, although still in the majority, had dropped to 62.66%, with the Italian population rising from 1.3% in 1951 to 11%. By 1971, the population of British origin in the Danforth area had dropped again to 46.5%, with Italians as the second largest group with 17.16% (Myrvold, 1979). By this time, the Greek population had become more and more visible in the area. By 1974, there were an estimated 30.000 Greeks on The Danforth, most of them first generation immigrants from rural and underdeveloped areas of Greece, mostly unskilled or semi-skilled, with very few professionals (Maltas, 1974).

Today, the Danforth is a visibly cosmopolitan community: there is an "Anglo-Saxon" Canadian group, currently increasing through the influx of professional families attracted by the still relatively affordable real estate and the proximity of the downtown area; the remnants of the Italian immigrant population; an already shrinking but still very striving Greek population; a growing East-Asian population moving northwards into the area.

> " (The Danforth)...is one of the most institutionally complete ethnic communities in Metro Toronto. ...any Greek person can conduct almost every aspect of daily life in his mother tongue, despite the fact that he lives in the oldest part of English Canada. Proof of this statement can be readily found in a stroll along Danforth Avenue between Broadview and Jones, In this two mile strip, there are row upon row of small Greek bakeries, fruit markets, butchers, fishmongers, gift stores, clothiers and cafes. All of these are either owned by Greek proprietors or are staffed by Greek speaking clerks. The primary language of business in these shops is Greek and not English.

> There are also a host of Greek lawyers, doctors, dentists, travel agents, realtors and insurance agents who have opened their offices for the express purpose of servicing the Greek community. There are Greek speaking tellers in the banks and trust companies, Greek interpreters and paraprofessionals... and even a Greek policeman on foot patrol." (Hart, 1981, pp.7-8)

Social and cultural aspects of the Greek Community

The children in this study are all members of first-generation immigrant families. Although born in Canada, their values, their way of life, their perspectives, are those of their families. As they spend more time in the school community, they tend to assimilate new values, new perspectives, those of the Canadian society they were born into, but not raised in; their knowledge of the English language quickly advances well beyond their parents'.

This is not to say that the "parents'" generation is not undergoing changes as well; furthermore, the community around them will change as the immigrant group starts assimilating into the mainstream "receiving" society. This process involves changes in culture, social structure and identification (Humphrey and Louis, 1973). However, the younger generation is more successful in identifying with the Canadian way of life and in their use of English than their parents (Economopoulou, 1976). Inevitably, areas of tension develop between the two generations within the family, as well as between the parents and the school community. Depending on a large number of factors, these tensions can either benefit or harm the development of the children in school, increase or decrease their chances of becoming successful members of society. Let us examine where these children are coming from, and the social and cultural characteristics of their community.

The majority of Greek immigrants in Canada may be designated as working class, both unskilled and semi-skilled, mostly from rural background; about 2 to 3% are professional and business people. At the time of their arrival in Canada, most of the Greek immigrants have practically no knowledge of English; the majority lacks any education beyond the six years of elementary schooling available in rural Greece (Nagata, 1969); the Greek community also includes doctors, lawyers, university professors, social workers. A large number of Greeks are associated with the restaurant business.

> "The most important aspect of the culture of the Greek immigrant seems to be the family. In it are revealed many of the Greek norms and values which differ from those of the Anglo-Saxon Canadian." (Economopoulou, 1976, p.21)

Greek immigrants, coming to Canada, bring with them the customs and traditions of family life in their native country. The Greek family is family-oriented, rather than child-centered; it includes grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws, cousins. The children are not the focus and they are expected to adjust to the rhythm of the family life; nevertheless, they are valued members and are viewed with pride if they are accomplished.

The unit of self-dependence is the family rather than the individual, however the individual never ceases to have a claim on his family. Family loyalties come before all others (Antoniou, 1974).

The Greek family is stable, with few divorces or separations; spouses are more likely to put up with conflict rather than seek divorce with the disgrace that it entails. The family is male-dominant, with sex roles clearly defined for the father and the mother, also for sons and daughters. Traditionally, the father is the authority and the family provider; the mother raises the children and is in charge of the household.

Although this type of relationship was carried over from Greece to Canada by many immigrants, contact with Canadian values and institutions has generated substantial changes in the Greek family makeup.

> "...(Greek) wives are beginning to enjoy higher status and greater intellectual freedom... more economic independence and technological conveniences. Greek wives in Canada now play an important role in the discipline and socialization of children, and assist their husbands in business, domestic decisions and the family's economic welfare... The power relationship in marriage varies with the spouses' academic achievement, length of residence in Canada, and age at the time of immigration." (Chimbos, 1980, p.113)

Hurst (1978) sees another aspect of the Greek family life: economic necessity forces more than 80% of the women to take jobs outside the home, with no change in the old-country standards of mothering and housekeeping, and no change in status.

Similarly, the gender roles of boys and girls are defined by tradition. Boys tend to be more pampered than girls, they have no household duties, and they can get away with practically anything. Girls early on assume household responsibilities and are expected to look after younger siblings. In very traditional homes, their activities are restricted and monitored by the entire family. Girls are seen as homemakers and future mothers, and it is not deemed necessary for them to reach the same level of education as the boys. Under the influence of Candian society, this attitude is visibly changing: parents start placing a higher value on the education of both sons and daughters, in order to provide them with a better life than they themselves had. (Economopoulou, 1976)

> "The manner of rearing children is usually identified by Greek parents as one of the chief differences between Greek and Anglo-Saxon family life. The Greeks maintain that the majority of Canadian children enjoy unnecessary freedom and do not have sufficient respect for their parents, elders, teachers and other officials." (Chimbos, 1980. p.114)

Very often, children are raised by grandparents, either in Canada or in Greece, to allow both parents to work. In a strange role reversal, the older children, as the most English-proficient members of the family, assume parental roles and take over the school interviews, the monitoring of younger siblings' scholastic activities, and sometimes even public relations aspects of the family business.

The Greek community in Toronto is relatively self-sufficient. A 1973 Greek directory published by the International Institute of Metropolitan Toronto listed 75 organizations aimed at social and recreational activities. There is a large number of Greek associations representing regional, business, philantropic and professional interests; there are radio and television programmes, as well as newspapers in Greek; there are social and welfare services for immigrants; and there is the Church.

> "No description of the background of the Greek immigrant is complete without discussing the role of religion. Religion and the Church are almost synonymous for the Greeks... Religion is so firmly entrenched in the Greek character and unquestioned that it can be taken with casualness and a lack of self conscious effort. It is accepted and ever present like the air.
>
> Religion plays an important part in the preservation of the Greek identity... the Church is called upon to serve as the preserver of Greek ideals." (Economopoulou, 1976, p.25)

The Greek community, like all ethnic immigrant communities, faces two serious linguistic problems: learning the language of the host society and, at the same time, preserving its own native language, and thereby its culture and identity.

Learning the language of the receiving society is perhaps the most important factor in the acculturation process (Chambos, 1980). While all new immigrants recognize the inevitability of their children's learning English in this country (Nagata, 1969), most of the adult immigrants perform poorly in English, due to the low level of their own schooling, to job situations where no English is spoken, and to the problems inherent in attending English classes, like shift work, overtime and fatigue.

Greek parents want their children to integrate and succeed in Canadian society; but it is also of the utmost importance to them that they acquire and preserve the Greek language and culture. Therefore, they are practically unanimous in support of bilingualism for their children, regardless of whether they do or do not attend Greek school. Most of the children from Greek families speak Greek at home, participate in Greek-run churches, schools and cultural organizations. The Greek schools have as their mandate not only to teach the Greek language to children, but also to acquaint them with the Greek culture and historical experiences, and to prevent communication breakdown and cultural alienation between the Greek child and his family.

The institutions that are primarily responsible for the teaching of Greek are the "Canadian" (Board of Education) schools, "ethnic" or "church" schools, and ultimately, the family. The children attend Greek schools for an average of 6 hours a week, with some extreme cases attending up to 11 hours a week.

In 1975, the Globe and Mail (Oct. 11, 75) reported that there were two organizations responsible for the education of Canadian Greek-born children: the Greek Community and the Greek-Canadian Educational Organization. The former has been operating since 1960 and had about 6,000 children in 94 public schools across Metro; the latter started in 1971 and had about 2,000 children in 17 schools.

In 1976, more than 12,000 children attended Greek afternoon schools (grades 1 - 6) throughout Canada. Approximately 4,000 children were enrolled in 100 Toronto schools operated by the Greek Community of Metropolitan Toronto Inc. alone, and a few hundred were enrolled in private Greek schools. (Chimbos, 1980, p.84)

In spite of these contradictory sources, it is obvious that Greek school, in one form or another, has a major priority in the Greek community. Although the majority of parents and children agree on the importance of Greek school, there is a certain amount of resentment expressed by the younger generation, due to double school work load, infringement on their free time, and basic differences between the educational frameworks of the mainstream and ethnic schools. This resentment does not usually affect the use of Greek language in the home, although English tends to replace Greek in inter-sibling communication.

The community has a number of Greek-language newspapers as well as Greek radio and television programmes;. However, their impact on the younger generation, already rooted in Canadian culture, is rather minimal. The Greek language is also maintained through frequent visits to Greece, especially during summer holidays; also through contact, both direct and in writing, with various members of the extended family in Canada and in Greece.

Education is seen as one of the main advantages of living in Canada; in Greece, educational opportunities are open only to a small proportion of children. The relationship between the school and Greek parents is a delicately balanced one, although communication between home and school has improved over the last few years. As with all other facets of his cultural and social makeup, the Greek immigrant brings to Canada views on education firmly rooted in the educational system of Greece.

> "A good child listens to his parents, runs errands and brings home praise from his teachers. He is rewarded by praise, candy or toys if the family can afford them. A poor school record on the other hand brings on parental displeasure, shame on the whole family and ridicule on the child. Since education is highly prized and is seen as a means of social mobility and as a vehicle for advancement in life, parents are eager to please the school authorities and enjoin the child to work and excel in his studies. On the other hand parental feelings can be easily bruised when parents feel that their child is not being properly taught, is given no homework or demonstrates attitudes to school and learning which are inconsistent with the parents' concepts and image of the school." (Antoniou, 1974, p.15).

In Greece, the educational system is subject-oriented, not child oriented. The classroom teacher is the sole authority in the elementary school, while in high school the language teacher is most influential; grammar and spelling are strongly emphasized. Discipline is rigorous; parents expect the school to teach manners. Religious instruction is a compulsory subject. Teachers are reserved and held in high respect by parents and children. Homework is very important: the students memorize each evening what they have learned in school during the day, and are examined on it next day.

In Canada, many of the Greek parents do not understand the educational system. They think that, because there is little or no homework, the system is inferior. Even when there is homework, most of the parents do not feel adequate to help their children. If their children do not excel in school, they look upon that as a tragedy, and usually blame the school for not forcing the children to learn.

> "Ethnic parents expect homework far more than non-ethnic parents... There have been runnings over educational philosophies; the Greek homes are strongly supportive of traditional straight grades, "sit down, shut up and work" and "do homework." (Grade 6 teacher, personal communication, June 1988)

Greek parents expect straight grades, ESL classes, academic basics, strict discipline; they do not favour field trips and activities. (Grade 4 teacher, personal communication, June 1988)

As parents get more acculturated in Canadian society and schools accumulate experience in dealing with multilingual and multicultural populations, there is a definite effort from both sides to come to terms over main educational issues in order to ensure that the children benefit from the best education available. In the following section, I will look at Johnson Community School and examine how it fulfills its role in this richly varied community.

THE SCHOOL

Located in the core of a bustling and vital community, today's Johnson Community School, with a student population of 486 and a staff of 22 teachers and administrators, reflects the cosmopolitan makeup of the area: 40% of the students are speakers of English as their first language, 40% are speakers of Greek, 10% are of East-Asian descent, while the other 10% represent a variety of other ethnic backgrounds such as Italy, Guyana, Trinidad, Yugoslavia, etc.

The Johnson Community School Handbook defines the school as

> "...a Community School -- that is, it is the school of the community -- serving that community and also having within itself a community of students, teachers, parents, and other people who have an interest in the school, both past and present."

The principal of the school states that one of the main objectives of the school is to develop students with:

1. a wholesome conviction of self-worth;
2. the skills of reading, listening, speaking, and writing, and the skills of arithmetic computation required for daily life;
3. the ability to collect, organize, present, and evaluate information;
4. the ability to discern between fact and opinion;
5. the ability to make reasoned judgements;
6. an inquisitive attitude towards knowledge;
7. an awareness of the needs and the rights of others, realizing that we should not infringe upon the rights of others;
8. an understanding of the democratic process, and the reponsibilities of a citizen of Canada;
9. an awareness of personal creative potential through varied Arts activities.

School history

The school was named in honour of a prominent businessman who was instrumental in the establishment of two of the schools in the area east of the Don River, Charlton School, and later, Johnson School. His family came from England in 1854 and settled in Toronto, in the Danforth area, where they developed a successful wholesale butchering business. Born and educated in the area, he became early on involved in the public affairs of the district. He was an eloquent promoter of the district's annexation to the city and of the building of a viaduct. Keenly interested in education, he helped in the formation of School Section #27 and in the building of Charlton School in 1891. In 1909, when it became evident that the rapidly growing community needed another school, he fought to have this school located central to the whole district. The capital sum raised by the rural trustees passed into the hands of the city board so that both country and city children could attend this new school.

Johnson Community School began its existence in 1909 in a two-room portable at the back of the present yard. The first permanent building of eleven rooms was erected in the summer of 1910; four rooms were officially opened in October, and by January 1911, all rooms were occupied. Because most classes had enrolments of fifty to fifty-five pupils, a third floor of six rooms was built in the summer of 1911. In 1913 and 1914, north and south wings of six rooms each were added, bringing the total number of rooms to 29. By 1917, Johnson had the third highest enrolment of any Toronto school with over 1,400 pupils. Johnson alumni during the first half of the century include broadcaster Gordon Sinclair, rugby great Teddy Morris, hockey star Bob Davison, Queen's University administrator and National Parole Board officer Alex Edmison, and author Robert Thomas Allen, whose writings are often based on his boyhood in the Danforth area. (Allen, 1977)

A major reorganization of school districts in the 1950's saw Johnson's grade 7 and 8 students shifted to Green Park School, while many of the Green Park kindergarten to grade 6 children ended up at Johnson; the school became a Junior School, kindergarten to grade 6. In 1960, 1,052 children were attending the school. In September 1963, 400 children living north of Danforth switched to the new Pinedale Avenue school.

By the early 1970's, it became obvious that major changes were needed in the old building; some of the rooms were not adequate anymore, there were concerns about fire safety, there were no gymnasium facilities. A committee of parents and teachers chose the architects and discussed the features needed in a new building; the final design won an architectural prize. The proposed building had yet to be approved by various committees and departments of the Toronto City Council, the Toronto Board of Education, and the Ontario Ministry of Education. Eventually, the Provincial Government refused to grant the necessary money; Johnson's student body, it was argued, could be absorbed by the neighbouring schools. The community rallied, petitions were circulated and doors were knocked on. The Toronto Board of Education raised a special tax levy in 1978, the Parks and Recreation Department also contributed, and for the first time a public school was built with no provincial money. Thus, with the support and active involvement of a whole community united in a common goal, in May 1981, Johnson Community School was officially opened to serve both the children and the community.

> "(The school) sits on a residential street, not far from the main thoroughfare of a predominantly Greek area. The structure is U-shaped with a children's play area in the centre of the U. A larger play area ...is found behind the school.
>
> ...The classrooms are brightly lit with large windows. The ground floor classrooms have back doors opening onto one of the play areas. The second floor classrooms have balconies with white pipe railings, creating a Mediterranean motif.

> ...When the new school was finished, most of the old one was demolished and replaced with a playground, hence the U-shape of the structure. Parts of the old school were preserved, though, such as the arch which dominates the walkway between the school and the parking area, and a wall pierced by four stained-glass murals.
>
> ...The school is aesthetically pleasing and well planned. In addition to several school offices, the front section now houses a community centre office and several spacious rooms at the disposal of the community centre... There is also a large pool, with dressing rooms and showers, used by students during school hours and community centre members on evenings and weekends.
>
> ...Besides regular day classes, (the school) provides heritage language instruction for its Greek population and ESL instruction for its newly arrived population. The Parks and Recreation Department sponsors activities -- sports programmes and swimming lessons -- on weekdays, evenings, and weekends." (Language and Learning, Fourth Interim Report, 1987, pp.7-8)

During its first years of existence, the majority of the children in the school were from Anglo-Saxon background. As the neighbourhood changed, the membership of the classrooms changed with it. An article in "The Telegram" (Sylvie, 1964) specifies that "less than 12 years ago, (Johnson's) pupils still came from the middle and working-class Anglo-Saxon families that had dominated the area since the school first opened in 1910." By 1964, nearly 50% of the school's population came from Italian or Greek homes. The article also quotes the then principal commenting that "the staff makes a practice to make no reference about the various nationalities of the students." At this time, the Italian population was still in the majority, as we find out from a further remark: "Greek officials. learned that 10% of Johnson's pupils were born in Greece or have Greek parents."

Another of the school's principals estimated that during the late 1960's, the school received approximately one new (Greek) family a week. School records show that in 1975, 369 of Johnson's 781 children were of Greek descent, with 273 born in Canada, 88 in Greece, and 8 in other countries. The Italian student population was down to 11 children; there were 46 children of Chinese descent, 38 from Jamaica, 11 from Trinidad, 19 from India.(Hart, 1981)

In the 1980's, due to a reduction of the immigration from Greece and to the movement of the local Greek population to other boroughs, the enrolment of the Greek population has started to show a slight decline.

A 1981 unofficial survey gives the following breakdown of the student population of 525 students, based on country of birth of parents:

Greek	53.7 %
"Anglophone"	23.4 %
Chinese	6.5 %
West Indian	5.7 %

Other ethnic 10.7 %

"Anglophone" refers here to the following birthplaces of parents: Canada, Great Britain, U.S.A., Australia, New Zealand, South Africa.

As mentioned above, the present principal estimates the current Johnson population to include approximately 40% children of Greek descent, alongside 10% East Asians, 40% Anglophones and 10% from other ethnic groups.

School programmes

The school provides Heritage Language classes for the Greek population, still the predominant ethnic group in the school. This programme was initiated in 1973, when the Greek Parents Association approached the Board of Education and requested that Greek language classes be incorporated in Grades 1 through 6 during the school's regular daytime schedule. Prior to that, there were some special Greek language classes offered during the evening aimed at the Greek population from the district. A 1975 document (Greek-Canadian Bicultural/Bilingual Program for Johnson and Pinedale Avenue Public Schools) states:

> "Johnson School - There will be 4 consecutive sessions of 20 minutes each from 1:30 to 3:00 PM. 4 afternoons each week. Attendance will be on a withdrawal basis. The total attendance time per student per week will be an hour and twenty minutes. Proposed grade levels are 4 to 6 inclusive.
>
> Greek parents ... have arranged for bilingual volunteers to teach the program. Other "casual" volunteers will provide special enrichment content from time to time.
>
> ...The program will be open to grade 4 - 6 children on a voluntary basis at the discretion of the parents.
>
> The program will operate at no extra cost whatever to the Board. The Greek parents are responsible for providing teachers and materials and arranging payment of any cost required for this purpose."

In 1977, the school featured a choice of Heritage language classes: two short classes in Greco-Canadian studies sponsored by the Greek Community Organization, offered during the day time and open to all students; and evening classes, four times a week, teaching Greek academics for students of Greek origin. (Allen, 1977)

Further changes occured; the school Handbook indicates:

> "Parents and staff have decided that, for the benefit of the entire school programme, the Heritage Language classes should commence after the regular school hours. The Board of Education offers 2 1/2 hours offered by the Board. There are now five instructors teaching approximately 90 pupils in five classes, Grades 1 to 6. These classes are taught Mondays and Wednesdays from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. -- commencing in mid-September and running until the end of May."

Updating the information, the principal reports that at the present time there are nine Heritage language classes, on Mondays and Wednesdays. These classes are taught by three teachers with Ministry certification and six teachers with certification from Greece. In order to teach Heritage language, the teachers have to pass a composite test, both by the Toronto Board of Education and the Metropolitan Greek Community. Half the remuneration for the teachers comes from the Toronto Board, and half from the Greek community.

There are vigorous discussions about the way the Heritage language classes are being taught, with the teachers, parents and children voicing opinions in favour and against various aspects of the curriculum and the educational views and opinions of the Heritage language teaching body, mostly trained in Europe and not entirely up to date with the Canadian teaching philosophies. One of the teachers voiced her concerns:

> "Between us and the Greek classes, there is absolutely no communication... We are teaching one kind of methodology during the day, at night it's an entirely different kind of methodology."

A consultant with the Heritage language programme is in the process of reviewing the curriculum, preparing thematic approaches to be used as curriculum guidelines. Another concern raised in connection with the Heritage Language programme is the potential length of the school day for some of the children, especially the younger ones, who might even start their day with a pre-school period in daycare.

The school's attitude towards ethnicity is of the utmost importance in the process of facilitating the children's adaptation to the school environment, and ultimately in promoting a high level of academic achievement for children from all ethnic backgrounds. The school library encourages the children to value their multiculturalism, by including a multilingual collection, mostly in Greek and Chinese, funded by the Board of Education. Children have thus the opportunity to explore their own heritage and to share and learn from other literatures and cultures. (Language and Learning Fourth Interim Report, June 1987, p.25)

Some of the teachers believe that there is need for greater curriculum leadership in order to deal with the ethnic variety in the school, and to allow the children and the staff to learn more about each other's cultures; in their opinion, the children who feel good about their cultures and are comfortable with their heritage will end up being more successful in school.

For new speakers of English, or for speakers of English as a second language who need additional language help, the school provides ESL and Language Booster classes. The ESL programme, with an enrolment of 35 to 40 students, aims at children who have not been in the country longer than two years and whose first language is not English. The Language Booster programme, with an enrolment of about 20 children, is designed for Canadian-born students who need help with language development.

The ESL classes deal with groups of 7 to 8 children, mostly from Greek, Chinese and Vietnamese ethnic backgrounds. Recently, another ESL teacher was added to the staff on a part-time basis, and some of the children were offered the possibility of getting double ESL time. However, this proved to be less beneficial than expected (1 + 1 did not equal 2), because the children were getting too many different teaching methodologies, and were left with less class time with their classroom teacher.

The school also provides a Reading Clinic, which teaches 9 children, on a one-to-one basis, and a Learning Centre, serving 24 children, in groups no larger than 4.

French is taught from grade 4; there are two programmes: Core French -- 40 minutes per day --, and Extended French, which offers language and other academic subjects in a complete immersion situation -- for half a day on a daily basis. In addition to that, primary pupils in grades 1, 2 and 3 have the opportunity to attend French classes after school; this program, Primary French, introduces the child to French in an informal way through games, crafts, singing and story-telling. Classes are held twice a week from 3:30 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.

The school offers a wide variety of extra-curricular activities integrated within the school-day: physical education, music, junior and senior choirs, orchestra, swimming, an array of sports and track and field activities, even philately and chess.

The school and the parents.

The school's parent-teacher association is called the Johnson Community Council (JCC); it was founded in 1969, based on the previous Johnson Home and School Association. The school Handbook supplies the following information:

> "(The JCC) is managed by an Executive which is elected each fall, and supported by the following current standing committees: Social Committee; Johnson Community Centre Advisory Council; Heritage Language Committee; Area East Representative; Reporting, Evaluation and Enrichment Committee; French Committee.
>
> The JCC has in the past helped greatly in such matters as the building of the new school, the implementation of Extended French (Grades 4 to 6) and the After-School French (Grades 1 to 3). Each year we have joined with the School and Community Centre in planning and running the Winter Carnival, our major fund-raising event. The JCC is also a learning forum about education at Johnson, in Toronto, and in Ontario. Increasingly, we have tried to hold information meetings on such topical subjects as computers, curriculum changes, and the implementation of the Heritage Language policy from the Board."

Hart (1981) chronicles the sometimes stormy, always exciting, evolution of the relationship between parents and school, a relationship complicated by the multifaceted cultural, social and political aspects of the various communities of the children at Johnson. One of the first successes of the then Association was to involve the Greek Community in decision-making; this date (1967) marks the first occasion when notices went home with the children in Greek, and that interpreters were provided to the Greek parents to encourage them to participate in meetings. One of the spin-offs of these Johnson efforts was the sponsoring by the Board of Education of cultural and heritage classes for children. Another visible and most valuable proof of the cooperation of the different ethnic communities within the Association was the new building for the Johnson Community School. In 1975, the association, by then Johnson Community Council, succeded in winning the right for the parents to have a voice in the choice of a principal for the school.

The parents continue to have a strong input in school affairs. The Council has two co-chairpersons, one invariably from the Greek Community. Although the balance of the population has changed, the Greek group maintains a rather high profile in the association, together with the Anglophile group. The East-Asian community is not very involved, at least not to the same degree as the other groups, although on an individual level they maintain an attentive communication with the classroom teacher and are involved in their children's progress.

The "reporting" to parents happens in a variety of ways: report cards, letters, notes from the teachers, interviews, phone conversations. There are four report cards, two of them mid-term ones, with the January report card complemented by an interview. The report cards include comments and assessments by other teachers who are involved in the child's education (French, swimming, ESL, etc.). The October Curriculum night takes the form of an informal visit which offers an insight into the kind of activities the children are involved in in their classrooms. The school claims: "We are as close as your phone. Or you could write a note... (we) can discuss areas of concern before they become problems".

Johnson school used to be classified as an inner-city school, however this status is not applicable anymore. The population of the school is stable and there is strong support from the community. The principal summarizes the educational aim of the school: "School programmes should allow each child to develop his/her potential to the fullest extent with the resources available to the school".

In the next section, we will meet individual children with a Greek background, analyze and evaluate their scholastic achievement as well as their social behaviour, and project these within the framework of the school and the community. Through a close scrutiny of the children's academic and social profiles, I will aim to examine the school as the prime element in the promotion and development of child literacy against a multicultural backdrop of diverse ethnicities, and to establish the parameters of the involvment of the home and community and its effect on the overall development of the children; also to discuss the interaction between children, school and parents, and its effects on the learning opportunities in the classroom and beyond it.

THE CHILDREN

I will start my analysis by looking at children from different cohorts, contrasting and comparing their behaviour and performance with those of other children of Greek ethnicity from their own cohort. First, we will meet Samantha and Helen, and some of their classmates, such as Mike and Peter; we will spend some time in their classroom and homes, and share their learning experiences. Following that, Ari will take the spotlight, and through his experiences, positive or otherwise, I will attempt to focus on some issues of relevance to the educational and ethnic communities.

Samantha and Helen

Samantha and Helen joined our research project in its second year, replacing two children who had moved to another school. At the time, they were both in grade 5, both veterans at Johnson, Samantha since Junior kindergarten and Helen since grade 1. They stayed with us until the completion of our research in the school, at which time they graduated from grade 6 and were ready to move on to the senior school.

The two girls present a contrast both in appearance and demeanour. Samantha is dark-haired, with deep dark eyes and a glowing tanned complexion; fair-skinned Helen is blonde, with a sweet shy smile. Samantha is a perpetuum mobile, athletic and chatty; Helen is quiet, reserved and industrious. Samantha's friendships come and go -- in grade 5 she had 14 best friends "and many more" --, and they are dramatic; Helen has had the same two very close friends for the last two years, with whom she shares working place, projects and secrets.

The girls continued with the same teacher through grade 5 and grade 6. This is how he describes them:

> Samantha:
>
> "She is very extroverted, and keen, and friendly, and outgoing, a really good kid. ... She has been involved in music, she was very heavily involved in team sports, she was in the girls' volleyball team, she was in the girls' slowpitch team, she was involved in the musical production of Cats, she does, I believe, ballet, and certainly does piano outside of the school, so she is into everything. If there is something available in the school, Samantha will take charge." (grade 5)
>
> "She is capable intellectually, good athlete, and terribly social. Any kind of public relations, Samantha will be fabulous, because she's bright and vivacious and she can work well... she's pretty, she's attractive and bright, and she's got personality, pizzazz, everything. She can do it all; she has that potential to do everything." (grade 6)
>
> And Helen:

> "If ever one wanted a classic definition of a lovely nice grade 5 girl, Helen would be it. She is just a sweetheart, she is very pleasant, keen but in a very quiet way, an excellent worker, an excellent excellent attitude, excellent effort, excellent behaviour, just a lovely kid to have in a room." (grade 5)

> "Very quiet, very agreeable, an excellent worker... Well functioning, I don't think Helen has missed more than one or two assignments in the whole year, and maybe not even that many... She is very responsible, very conscientious student... she is a very quiet girl." (grade 6)

Ethnicity, home environment and bilingualism.

Samantha feels "more Canadian than Greek", however when asked about her self-perceived nationality, she identified herself as "Greek, born in Canada". Helen was in a quandary as to the order of priorities: her parents were definitely "Greek", however she wasn't sure whether she was "Greek-Canadian" or "Canadian-Greek". Quite perplexed about the problem she created for herself, she left it unsolved.

Both girls view their ethnicity as an important factor in their lives. Samantha, the ever-rebelious, does not like going to Greek school and considers it a waste of time. But she never questions her commitment to the language and culture of her family: she enjoys living in the Danforth area, in the middle of the Greek Community, she relishes the fact that she can communicate with her grandmother and other members of the family in Greek. By grade 6, Samantha stands up to her parents and decides that this is going to be her last year of Greek school; she doesn't think that it is important for her anymore, and she feels that it takes away from the time she would like to spend on her other multiple activities.

Helen, although somewhat critical of the methodology of Greek school, goes dutifully to Greek school both after school and on week-ends. She considers it important both for her family and for herself. She has no notions of revolt, and is not involved in any other extra-curricular activities that might compete for her time. She appreciates the sizeable input of knowledge -- geography, history, literature -- that she gains through her Greek studies.

Although both girls' families have firm roots in the Greek community, their home environments differ substantially. Both Samantha and Helen were born in Canada from Greek-born parents; both their fathers, blue-collar workers, have been in Canada for a long time, Samantha's for 20 years and Helen's for 22 years. The resemblance ends here: their mothers, the most influential factor in the girls' lives, came to Canada at very different ages and developed in divergent ways.

Samantha's mother came to Canada at the age of nine; she entered the school system and completed 11 1/2 grades. Although her home language remained Greek, she became fluent in English, qualified as a medical secretary and pursued her education in order to upgrade her position. Helen's mother came to Canada as an adult, at the age of 28, after going through a few years of part-time technical school in Greece. In Canada, she stayed home, where she took care of her family and also worked as a seamstress.

Surrounded by family and a Greek-speaking community, she has never learned English, except for the most elementary vocabulary, and has to rely on interpreters or on her children to communicate with the outside world.

Samantha's present home environment consists of her mother and an older brother, and their conversation is usually in English; she maintains close -- almost daily -- contact with her father and maternal grandmother, who prefer to communicate with her in Greek. Helen's family, as often is the case in Greece, is an extended one: her family --mother, father and a brother-- share their home with her maternal uncle, his wife and three children. The home language is Greek, with some English thrown in when the children interact without adults.

Samantha's mother, although not active in the school, is up-to-date on her daughter's scholastic activities, and quite verbal about her education and about her teachers. She is not completely satisfied with the quality of education in the school, and would like her daughter to be more challenged. She encourages Samantha to get involved in a wide variety of sports, and has also enrolled her for piano lessons at the Conservatory of Music. She sees Samantha's future in politics or law, and expects her to be "independent, a realist, a knowledgeable individual." (Parents' interviews, 1986 and 1988)

Helen's mother admits to not understanding what is going on in school. She would like to get more involved, but the language barrier is insurmontable. She is happy with Helen's progress in school; like Samantha's mother, she receives monthly reports from the teacher and is pleased with him. She helps Helen with Greek homework, but is unable to follow her English scholastic activities; one of the older cousins comes to the rescue if necessary. She has high ambitions for her daughter --"to go on with school and university to have an easier life"-- ambitions made possible through their coming to live in Canada; she would like Helen to be a pediatrician, and her daughter shares this dream. (Parents' interviews, 1986, 1988)

Samantha was encouraged early on by her self-sufficient independent mother to get involved in extra-curricular activities: private piano and ballet classes, Greek dancing, gymnastics team in school, a wide array of sports at school, French immersion; she participates in each and every show at school, also in buddy-reading and buddy-writing. A self-appointed and enthusiastic typist, she provides secretarial and editorial services to her friends.

Helen, coming from a double household with a total of five children of whom she is the second oldest, has very different attittudes and expectations. Her life is much more home-oriented; the school is a place for learning, as well as one for socializing -- Helen has close and dear friends --, but all her other activities center around her family and ethnic group. Her mother appreciates her aptittudes and looks forward to higher education for her daughter. However, at this stage, she seems to be unaware of all the extra-curricular possibilities offered by school life. Helen participates in buddy-reading and buddy-writing, as part of the curriculum; she is not involved in any sports, except for gym and swimming, which are built into the time-table. She is enrolled in Core French, rather than in the Extended Immersion programme, for which her academic abilities would qualify her. Her extra-curricular activities are centered around Greek classes, Church and Sunday school.

As a girl in a large Greek family, she probably has duties commensurate with her time and age. This is reflected in her choice of "monitor jobs", mostly arranging and cleaning, or preparing the tea for the teacher. As a touching testimony to her views on her role as a member of her family, she included the following passage in a story:

> "Once upon a time there was a big fat king whose name was King Christopher. King Christopher was screaming at the Prince and Princess because they did not want to wash the dishes."

As one of five children in the household, Helen knows how to be unobtrusive: in the classroom, she is quiet yet active, continuing to work even in periods when she is allowed to relax, while conducting her busy conversations in a subdued tone.

The girls' level of proficiency in Greek echoes the differences in their home environment. Both started off as Greek speakers, and continue to use Greek in the home, but with different degrees of frequency and efficiency. At the present time, Samantha uses the Greek language with her grandmother and father, and sometimes in the community. She attends Board-sponsored Greek classes for one hour twice a week, and intends to stop at the end of grade 6. At home, Helen speaks almost exclusively Greek, and attends a private Greek school three times a week for a total of 9 hours weekly, in addition to two hours of (Greek) Sunday School following Church on Sundays.

All the Greek-speaking children were assessed for proficiency in their first language by a Research Officer (a native speaker of Greek), both in the first year of the project and at the end of the project. Because of their joining the project in its second year, Samantha and Helen missed the first assessment and were assessed only at the end of grade 6. This assessment covers areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing, on scales ranging from 0 to 5.[2]

As expected, the two girls scored very differently in Greek. Samantha was uncomfortable with the whole idea of being tested in Greek. She protested vehemently and had to be assured that the results of the assessment were strictly for our project and would not be shared with her classroom teacher. The researcher testing her evaluated her performance in listening, speaking and writing at level 2 ("struggling") and in reading at level 3 ("can get by"); she commented:

> "She can write very simple things, like her name, the school she attends, her friends' names, etc. She makes a lot of grammatical, syntactical and spelling mistakes.
>
> ...She speaks a little in Greek and she mixes a lot of English words. Her Greek vocabulary is fairly poor... Her understanding of Greek is limited to everyday language..."

Helen scored the highest of all the children from her cohort. The researcher rated her at level 5 ("superior for age") for listening, speaking and reading, and level 4 ("native-like control") for writing. Her comments bordered on the superlative:

> "Her ability to speak Greek is almost native-like. Very good vocabulary... She reads very fluently... No spelling, syntactical or grammatical errors (in writing)."

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[2] 0=zero, 1=minimal, halting, 2=struggling, 3=can get by, 4=native-like control, 5=superior for age.

The classroom.

So far, we have seen where Samantha and Helen are coming from, what their home and community experience is, also their degree of proficiency in their first language. We will turn now to the other important element in the girls' life, the school, and meet their teacher and their classmates.

During their two years' involvement in our research project, the girls stayed with the same teacher and practically with the same classmates. Their classroom was a mozaic of nationalities, languages and customs. In grade 5, the 31 children in the classroom included: 11 native speakers of English, 13 native speakers of Greek, 5 native speakers of Chinese, 1 native speaker of Japanese and 1 native speaker of Vietnamese. In grade 6, the 29 children in the classroom included 13 native speakers of English, 10 native speakers of Greek, 4 native speakers of Chinese, 1 native speaker of Italian and 1 native speaker of Japanese.

A typical day in this classroom's life starts with a discussion period, to which the children bring any news collected through radio, television or newspapers, or any other kind of information that they wish to have discussed with their classmates and teacher. This discussion period can cover anything, from sports and politics, to the most outrageous gossip, with the teacher, like a panel moderator, directing the flow of the discussion. Boys bring in the latest sports news, girls focus on teen heart-throbs or movie stars; there are reports of trips or outings. Some of the children always have something to say and thrive on the attention bestowed on them, others listen quietly, or retire to their desks and start an activity.

The discussion period usually finds Helen very attentive and perfectly quiet, with some whispered comments directed to her two close friends. Samantha is involved, either with some input or with comments on somebody else's. Mike, a serious looking boy, contributes some perfectly accurate sports information, or something that he read about recently. Mike speaks slowly and deliberately, and some of the children will jump ahead and cover the end of his sentences. Peter, solidly ensconced in his peer group -- Greek, Chinese and English speaking boys --, adds his piece of wisdom to anything related to sports. Blonde and dreamy Andrea tells the story of something wondrous that happened, or maybe didn't, to her the night before. The teacher listens, agrees or disagrees, explains, elaborates, and always tops the contribution with a piece of dry humour; the joke passes through the class, sometimes unnoticed, sometimes acknowledged, sometimes only as a fleeting smile on Mike's face: he always catches it, even when it is well disguised.

At times, the discussion is replaced by the teacher's reading to the class from a novel; the children sit around him on the floor, listen or dream, then talk about it. Some faces are lit by the words pouring from the book, others are indifferent, or deep into some activity of their own.

There is a weekly timetable posted on a stand, with accurate timing for each period of the day. After discussion period or reading period, the teacher turns to the timetable and has a quick run through the day's activities, with detailed instructions for each group, and specific reminders to individuals. The class rotates on group activities, such as library, conferencing with the teacher, computer use, science activities. There are common periods, when the teacher instructs the whole class, when they write quizzes or tests, when the whole class is engaged in silent reading, or buddy-reading with younger children; also during gym, swimming, or music. The French periods are partially overlapping: Extended French lasts for half a day, Core French just for a 45 minute period. There are the "Heinz" periods, independent periods for catching-up (ketchup), when the children have a choice of focus, depending on their own work priorities.

A lot of individual responsibility is given to the children. They monitor their progress on a chart displayed on a wall, and are responsible for handing in assignments and reports. The classroom is in perpetual motion, a well-orchestrated group, with the teacher holding a firm baton. This organization of behaviour and work habits is the result of a two-year investment in this class. Some of the teachers prefer keeping their students for a longer period than the customary one school-year; the pay-off: continuity, security, long-term curriculum planning.

> "Most of them are very keen on staying with me, not necessarily because I am terrific, but because they always love to stay with a teacher that they just had... In discipline, I did a lot of "killing" this year; but partly, that was because I foresaw it as a two-year program where, once having had a lot of ground rules and a framework set in grade five, I could allow a lot more individual and group activity and cooperative learning to go in next year, which I could do almost immediately, because I think a lot of ground rules have been set...
>
> I found it an efficient use of the year, for the simple reason that you don't waste September, and sometimes even October and November, in getting things established in terms of the routines and discipline or expectations... By the second week of school, I am ready to go, and the kids know what to do." (Teacher's interview, grade 5, 1987)
>
> And at the end of grade 6:
>
> "It (having the same class for a second year) has enormous benefits... I have gone further with these kids than I possibly could have in one year." (Teacher's interview, grade 6, 1988)

The strategy of keeping the same children with the same teacher works if the chemistry is right. It worked with Helen: the teacher liked her, she liked the teacher, and the parents were pleased with the results. Samantha's case was quite different; as she grew up, she became more involved in extra-curricular activities and started neglecting her academic ones. She was penalized for not meeting deadlines in a classroom based on a strict scheduling of a wide variety of activities, many of them interconnected. In an interview conducted at the end of grade 6, Samantha declared that she would have preferred to change teachers, to have a new teacher and the opportunity to "learn another system" every year. Her mother felt that the teacher was punishing Samantha unnecessarily -- she was not allowed to go on a school trip because she did not return some books.

Mike's father, as well, was not very enthusiastic about having his son continue with the same teacher two years in a row. Although very happy with his progress in grade 5, he considered it necessary for him to change teachers for the next grade. Mike is very intelligent and much more mature intellectually than expected at this age; however, he has trouble expressing himself, partly due to a certain amount of shyness and partly due to a slight speech impediment. On occasion, he can be misjudged or misunderstood, or his slowness of speech can be interpreted as insecurity or lack of knowledge. His teacher considered that the child would have an advantage continuing with somebody who already knew him and valued his strengths and talents: he had to enroll the services of a Greek-speaking staff member that Mike's father trusted in order to present his point of view and to gain the father's vote of confidence.

Having the class for two years also meant that the curriculum could be planned on a long-term basis. The teacher introduced his class to literary genres -- both fiction and non-fiction --, by planning the Language Arts program around various genres of interest to the children: science fiction, fantasy, mystery, historical fiction, newspaper. Each unit, about 5 to 6 weeks long, included a variety of related disciplines; children would first view videos related to the topic in question, go on field trips like the Planetarium or a Museum, then move on to literature. This included books read by the teacher to the class, books on audiotapes available at the Listening Centre, an individual book for each child chosen with the help of the teacher and/or librarian, group and individual conferences on the reading materials, art work connected to the books read by the children, and eventually an original story written by each child within the particular genre explored. For historical fiction, Environmental Studies were directed towards specific periods covered by the literature in that genre. For "newspaper", children explored the technicalities of the printing industry at a major newspaper in the city.

This kind of Language Arts curriculum worked best over a longer period of time. so the children entered the world of mystery literature in grade 6 with a strong awareness of literary genres acquired through their work in fantasy and science fiction in grade 5 (Shechter and Schecter, 1987). Many of their stories were "published" (typewritten, illustrated and bound) and displayed in the school library in the "Johnson Authors" section.

A few years previously, the school had introduced a buddy-reading program: children from grade 5 and 6, sometimes even 4, paired with children from kindergarten and grade 1 and read to them or with them two to three times a week. This program branched into a buddy-writing program, also based on collaboration between an older and a younger child, this time with the purpose of producing written and illustrated texts. Many of the buddy-writing stories eventually found their place in the library collection. Samantha, Helen and their classmates were enthusiastic buddy-readers and buddy-writers, developing in the process their literacy skills as well as a sense of responsibility and maturity.

A by-product of spending two years with the same classmates and the same teacher was the development of self-controlled discipline and class management. The teacher provided the children with the means of working independently as well as in groups, with well-defined goals and deadlines; the children had the choice of adopting the system and making it work, or returning to a previous standard work arrangement. The children loved it and it worked... to a point. However, towards the end of grade 5, the classroom entered a crisis period. when the self-accepted discipline and work management no longer worked in a satisfactory way: assignments were not handed in on time, there was too much noise and disturbance. The teacher offered the children two alternatives --"new" and "old"-- and asked them to vote. The "old" alternative, the one introduced towards the beginning of grade 5, included grouping of desks, art cupboards, computers, novels, math activities, theme teaching, library groups, trips. discussions. The "new" system, actually the older standard way of teaching, would have converted the classroom to rows rather than groups, with no room for cupboards, computers, etc. and would have replaced their way of learning with the use of stencils, textbooks rather than novels, no library groups, and no class discussions, videos or trips. The children voted unanimously to return to their "old" ways and to reevaluate and change their behaviour and work habits.

> "(The children) prefer more fluid classrooms... most kids don't want limits... They would want the chance to do extra things, both within and outside the classroom." (Teacher's interview, grade 5, 1987)

Entering grade 6, these children had already had the experience of working within a system they liked and chose themselves; they also knew what would happen if they didn't make the system work.

I asked the children what they liked and disliked about their school. In grade 5, Samantha preferred shopping to school; by grade 6, she admitted to liking school. Peter enjoyed the opportunity to learn a third language, French. Mike, with his usual sense of humour, declared that he didn't like school because "I don't have time for everything" and that his favourite subject was recess. Helen liked best about school the opportunity to "be with my friends". Samantha liked best activities, such as gym and track and field, and listed French as her favourite subject.

This casual approach to their membership in the school community reflects feelings of belonging and ownership, of accepting school as part of their lives, rather than just a place to go to and return from. As we will see later, these children, although from very different types of home environment, perform equally well in school, are very proud of their achievements and are eager to continue their way towards higher levels of learning, many of them with a university education goal in sight.

One of the best features of the classroom, and of most classrooms in the school, is the richness of its ethnic makeup. I tried to identify patterns of friendships between the children, questioning whether ethnic background or gender were relevant bonding factors. I looked at the seating plans, the responses of the children to questions about friendship, also I talked to the teacher. I was also interested in the relationship, if any, between ethnicity and learning habits.

According to the teacher, the ethnic make-up of the class is not relevant in terms of friendships, and it is rather mixed up from the point of view of its relevance to behaviour:

> "I don't see ethnicity being a factor socially... One group of boys has two Chinese, a Japanese and an Egyptian... It's all over the place and changes, and it doesn't change for ethnic reasons.
>
> ...In terms of behaviour... it's difficult to generalize with such an obviously small sampling... we have almost two extremes, we have Helen and Roula who are very quiet, very immature in terms of being socially aware; and then you have Samantha and Stacey, who are absolutely boy-crazy. So I don't draw patterns, I can't see something consistent in terms of ethnicity... just social inclination rather than ethnicity."
> (Teacher's interview, grade 6, 1988)

Regardless of ethnicity or gender, all children like playing games in the gym, setting up the computers, preparing tea in the staff room, watering the plants, or feeding the fish. However sedentary activities, like filing or putting books on the shelves, are usually done by girls. There are chatty Chinese children, and quiet ones; chatty Greek children and quiet ones as well. The best achievers in the classroom are a Chinese boy, two native English speakers, a Greek boy, a Greek girl and an Egyptian boy.

The teacher does perceive, however, a difference in work habits: Greek boys have poorer work habits, "because they are very spoiled at home"; "traditional" Greek girls work very hard and steadily; all the Chinese children work well, however in some cases, as they become "Canadianized", their work habits deteriorate. The teacher suggested that subject preferences do not follow ethnicity, but rather gender: generally, boys tend to be better in math and girls in language.

Friendships cross all ethnic lines, but not gender lines: the children choose to sit and work with classmates of the same gender. Samantha sits with two native English-speaking girls and likes to work with them, even dreams of going together with them to study at Harvard; she favours Stacey, a Greek girl, as recess partner. Helen's consistently best friends are two "English" girls. Peter's best friends are a Greek boy and a Chinese boy, with the Chinese one as favourite work partner. His buddies for playtime are Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and Egyptian. Mike, the very serious Greek boy, has no "best" friends; he loves to have as work partner a Chinese boy "because both finish really fast", and he lists as "only" friends three Greeks, an Italian, a native English speaker and a Chinese. Andrea, a native Canadian, has two Greek and two "English" best friends. Lily, the gracious Chinese girl, has no "best" friends in the class; she sits with a Greek girl and befriends two Greek and two "English" girls.

One of the teacher's main goals in his curriculum design is the preparation of the children for the senior school. The change in educational methodology is quite drastic: from one classroom teacher in charge with the bulk of the teaching curriculum to different teachers for each subject; from one "home" classroom, a real home environment for the children, to a rotary system where the children move from room to room; from personal attention bestowed on each child and direct contact with parents to a much more depersonalized system where children have to take on the major responsibility for their academic progress.

The teacher ponders on the problems facing the children in the new school:

> "...The next year is going to be really traumatic; I mean, they are leaving the school. The bulk of them will go to Green Park, which is a very, very large senior school, sixteen or seventeen different classes, (grades) seven and eight... There are usually about ten grade eight and ten grade seven classes on rotary. So, it's kind of an intimidating thing.
>
> ...When they (the children) go to senior school... it's your responsibility to do things, and if you don't get them done, you lose out... It's frustrating to go from a school where they've been for perhaps as many as eight years... into two-year multiple teacher situation with computerized reports."

The change from one school to another can be a problem for some of the kids. The teacher worries about Mike's succes in the new school:

> "... (He) may tend to get lost in the shuffle in going from one room to the next. He would almost be better going to a senior school where there was a very limited form of rotary going from class to class. I think that he may have trouble adjusting to so many different people, and with the very busy workload at a senior school...
>
> (Mike is) potentially an excellent student because of his intellect and his flair for the language, but he works so slowly and is such a reflective thinker... that I think he is going to be quite frustrated next year."

However, the advantages of the senior school constitute an important bonus for children like Samantha, who are involved in a wide variety of activities:

> "They do a lot of good things, they have a tremendous number of extra-curricular activities, lots and lots of sports, both boys and girls.... Another really neat thing they have at Green Park is that they have a Student Parliament, they have elections, which is great."

The senior school also has advantages for children who have repeated and are now older than their classmates:

> "Some older kids do well in a rotary system because the subject specialist can challenge them in areas where they are good, and they feel so much better succeeding in certain specific areas, that the increase in self-esteem helps them do other things... for the really good bright kids, it structures them all over the place, which you couldn't do in a non-rotary system... And certainly the sports is one area where they are really well challenged; and they love it."

This is the classroom where Samantha, Helen, and their classmates spent a major part of their lives, where they got acquainted with literature, math and science, where they acquired their social skills, where they began and ended friendships, and where they got ready for life. After having looked at their learning environments, both at home and at school, let us get closer and focus on their academic achievements and see how the two girls' performance was perceived and evaluated by their teacher and by themselves.

Academic achievement.

At the end of grade 5, the teacher commented on Samantha's report:

> "Samantha has had a fine all-round year. She has made good academic progress."

He graded her "high" on most topics, with the exception of spelling, which was graded "low" and a few other topics like grammar, creative writing, projects and research, measurement and graphic, which were evaluated at "medium" level. Written comments place Samantha at grade level in reading, spelling ("when complete"), and in arithmetic. In a class of 31, he placed her tenth. Her Extended French teacher rated her "Very Good" across the board, with a "Satisfactory" mention for group work, accompanied by a remark about her socializing too much.

The grade 6 report is more ambivalent: while the comments are quite positive, the actual grading seems to have slipped a little from grade 5, reflecting Samantha's growing interests in extra-curricular activities, as well as her other age-related interests. The teacher, however, notes that she has had a good year:

> "(Samantha) has worked more consistently this year than in grade 5. Work habits are still an area where Samantha needs to improve. Samantha has done well in school sports, and has become a well-rounded student."

Among her 28 classmates, Samantha was placed sixteenth.

The Extended French teacher was very appreciative of Samantha's efforts in her class· she gave her "Very Good" across her final report card and complemented her ratings with comments like:

> "Excellent effort all year! very good progress! Samantha's enthusiasm and extensive background knowledge should enable her to do very good work in grade seven."

At the end of grade 6, Samantha was given the French Award.

Helen entered grade 5 with glowing reports from her previous teachers. Her grade 3 teacher qualified her as "very good" in practically all topics and commented on her performance:

> "Helen puts effort in all activities and usually succeeds well... Her assignments are always carefully completed... Helen is able to express her thoughts coherently and concisely."

In grade 4, Helen's teacher rated her at "high" and "median" level in all topics and noted:

> "She gave an excellent report on her novel... Helen produced an excellent project on Black Creek Pioneer Village and Life in Pioneer Times... Good work, Helen!"

In grade 5, Helen was evaluated at grade level in reading, spelling and math, and praised for her behaviour, working habits and conscientiousness:

> "Helen tests at grade level in reading. Work has been well done. Helen tests at grade level in spelling... Handwriting is very neat. Stories are well done.
>
> Helen is a very pleasant, hard-working girl. She is always eager to please, and is very conscientious about her assignments.
>
> ...Good effort, good participation, good skills."

She was placed thirteenth among 31 children.

In grade six, her Core French teacher assigned her "very good" grades for reading, writing, participation, effort, and "satisfactory" for listening skills and oral expression. Her classroom teacher evaluated her as "high" for all Language and Math topics, except for oral work in Language and problem solving in Math, which were assigned median levels of achievement. Her final report concludes with:

> "Helen has been a pleasure to teach during these last two years. She has been an excellent worker... Well done!"

In grade 6, she was ranked tenth in a class of 28 children.

The children's self-perception as learners.

I talked with the children about their views on learning, and their self-perceptions as learners.

Samantha considers herself a "pretty good" reader and a good writer. She describes the qualifications of a good reader as being able to "read clearly and not slow. understand what they read". She considers reading important in the present as well as in the future:

> "It's good for your mind, to get your things off your mind... If you can't read, you can't do anything.
>
> When you grow up and become a lawyer... If you become a lawyer or a doctor, you have to read ... or if you have to become an actor and you have to read a script... "

Reflecting the work of her teacher on genre, Samantha likes to read fantasies, mysteries, historical fiction novels. Reflecting her age and peer group interests, she also enjoys magazines and the books in the "Sweet Valley High" series.

Samantha's self-perception of her abilities as a writer changed from grade 5 to grade 6; while her self-imposed standards rose, paralleling her development as a learner and her continously increased exposure to literature, her commitment to other interests and her time limitations affected her performance as a writer. In grade 5, she described herself as a writer as follows:

> "... I finish a paragraph, I read it over to see if it makes sense. If it doesn't make sense, I wouldn't put it in the story. At the end, I read it all and do the same thing... I correct it up, if I forget quotes I add them, and if I mispelled a word I fix it up.
>
> A good writer makes sense. A story should be at least 5-6 pages. I have to know what I write. I won't hand it in if it is not right."

In grade 6, Samantha is self-critical. Although she acknowledges the fact that other people consider her good, she is not happy with her output anymore:

"I don't like the way I write."

She describes a good writer as "a person who would be confident, who would believe in himself." Her writing strategy in grade 6 is less definite than it was in grade 5:

> "...Get pen, pencil, paper... Title, decorate for ten minutes... Start thinking and writing, write about a page and stop..."

Prodded by the researcher, Samantha goes into more details: there is a first draft which is handed in to the teacher, there are also corrections to the draft, typing, putting the story in a "book" form and sharing it with classmates and buddy-readers.

As part of her Language Arts curriculum, Samantha wrote a science fiction story "The Accident", a fantasy story "The Princess Disappears" and a mystery story "Who killed Mackenzie?". She also wrote stories together with her buddy-writer[3] and contributed to "Johnson News", the classroom newspaper. (Appendix 1)

Shy and quiet, Helen went through a process of self-evaluation opposite to Samantha's. In grade 5, she giggled an embarrassed "I think so" in answer to the researcher's inquiry about her opinion of herself as a reader; as a writer, she qualified herself as "kind of", adding that good writers have "more fantasy" in their stories than herself. By grade 6, encouraged by her teacher and her peers, Helen accepted herself as a good reader and a good writer; she described a good writer as having "a good imagination" and "knowing how to write".

Helen appreciates the usefulness of reading by applying its use to her projected career goal:

> "You speak better... you might get a diploma and then turn out to be a famous doctor."

Her reading choices include, besides the genres investigated in the Language Arts curriculum of the classroom, books from the "Sweet Valley High" series, books from the public library, and Greek books for Greek school. When she reads, she imagines "things that I read in my mind" and "the book gets more interesting". She enjoys choosing her own books because "I choose books that I enjoy myself. I am not forced to read a book."

When she writes, Helen follows a well-organized route:

> "I think of a topic; I think of the main story; I think of an ending; then I write it down; I show it to the teacher, he corrects it... a good copy; the teacher types it; we illustrate it, draw a cover for it, put it out; people read it and write comments"

Like Samantha and her other classmates, Helen wrote a story for each one of the genres studied in the Language Arts program, in addition to an assortment of short stories and class projects: "Planet Seika" for the science fiction unit, "Tropical Rocky Land" for the fantasy unit, and "Kidnapping" for the Mystery unit. She also buddy-wrote with one of her classmates and with a young buddy-writer. (Appendix 1)

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[3] The buddy-writing project is an outgrowth of the buddy reading program.

Summary

In the previous sections, we have looked at Samantha and Helen's home and community backgrounds, as well as at their school environment and performance. Without drawing any conclusions at this point, a brief comparative discussion of the two girls' respective home and school experiences is in order.

The two girls come from homes rooted in Greek ethnicity; however, Samantha's family is much more assimilated to Canadian life than Helen's: the home language is more often English than Greek, Samantha is encouraged to take part in a large number of extra-curricular activities both within the school and outside the school, her participation in the Greek educational system is minimal, and her knowledge of Greek is limited. Samantha learned French in the Extended program and was awarded the French Prize at the end of grade 6. Her mother is perfectly functional in English -- she was educated mostly in Canada -- and has a successful professional career outside the home.

Helen's family is very traditional, the home language is exclusively Greek; Helen is not involved in any extra-curricular activities except for those built in the regular timetable; she has a high degree of fluency in Greek and participates intensively in Greek school and church activities. She receives no help with school work from her family, except from occasional support from one of her cousins; she learned French in the Core program. Her mother is not functionally literate in English and works in her home.

In both cases, the parents expressed a lot of interest in their daughters' learning activities and in their academic future; both mothers expect their daughters to go to university and pursue professional careers.

Both Samantha and Helen were evaluated positively in school, although there was some difference in their progress: Samantha seemed to lose some ground on the academic level as her interests widened and she became more aware of extra-scholastic activities; Helen appeared to maintain the same attitude through the two years I observed her and showed progress in her school work.

There was a marked difference in the attitudes of the two girls, a difference which was reflected in their academic performance: Samantha was encouraged to grow in other directions than the purely academic and started neglecting her school, but on the other hand, she developed as a person and enlarged her fields of interest; Helen restricted herself to her scholastic activities and showed steady progress, while developing no other external interests whatsoever.

One hesitates to be prescriptive and sanction either one of these directions. According to the girls' teacher, Samantha will develop scholastically later on, incorporating the wider range of her experiences within her learning scope, while Helen will stay constantly "good" but might be overtaken by children with a larger variety of experiences and interests. While their future is open to speculation, it is obvious that their present performances and attitudes are partly a reflection of their families' perspectives and philosophies.

Although there are differences between the academic profiles of the two girls, both are capable learners and earned the appreciation and respect of their teachers and peers. In the next sections, I would like to focus my attention on another case study, totally different from the ones discussed so far. While in Samantha's and Helen's cases, the differences in home environment and school experience did not result in major dissimilarities in the girls' success as learners, my next subject's case brings forth issues of major importance both for parents and educators, and poses wide-ranging questions as to the role of the school and the home in providing the best possible learning and developmental environment for children with special needs and expectations.

Ari

Ari joined our project in Year 1, in grade 2; he continued through grade 3, and started grade 4. Due to reasons that will be discussed later, Ari left the school during grade 4, after the Christmas vacation, and moved to a school in Scarborough. Because of Ari's leaving the school unexpectedly, some of the relevant data from the child's academic performance in grade 4 is missing from our files.

A nice looking boy, with dark complexion and large dark eyes, Ari was always smiling, interested, eager, ready to be of help, a perfect little "gentleman". "Very friendly and well-behaved member of the class", says his grade 2 teacher in the January 86 report. "He is very warm, very open", tells his grade 3 teacher (June 87 teacher interview). "He certainly was very mature in social situations, very polite, his manners were automatic... he is a lovely boy", informs his grade 4 teacher (June 88 teacher interview).

Considered intelligent, with caring and concerned parents, a loving and helpful older brother, lots of friends, Ari slipped from a ranking of 13th out of 23 in grade 2, to 14th out of 17 in grade 3, and finally 28th out of 28 in grade 4. The possibility of repeating a grade was considered. The parents blamed the school; the school complained of the parents' lack of cooperation in following a recommended path for the child. Let us look at both the family and the school environment and try to recognize the factors, both positive and negative, that concurred in making Ari what he is: a lovable boy, with severe academic problems.

Demographic information.

Ari was born February 15, 1978, in Toronto. His parents, both born in Greece, have been in Canada since 1963 (father) and 1962 (mother). Both parents are well educated: the father, a tool and die maker, completed 4 years of college in Greece, and after winning a scholarship, continued his education for another two years at an American college; the mother followed 2 years of high school with 3 years of dress-making school in Greece, which were complemented by 2 years of night school at the Central Technical School in Toronto, studying drafting and designing. Both parents have a good working command of English. Ari's brother Spiros, 9 years older, is a student at the Central Technical School. His maternal grandparents recently returned to Greece, after 24 years in Canada.

Until last year, the family lived in the Danforth area, where the parents have a family business (art, sewing supplies). While Ari was in grade 3, they moved to Scarborough, into a new home. The child remained at Johnson School, which is conveniently close to the parents' store. In January 1988, in the middle of grade 4, he was transferred to a school in Scarborough, close to the family's new home.

Growing up amongst adults -- his parents and a much older brother -- Ari was early on included in "mature" discussions and taken places with his family. His grade 4 teacher comments:

> "He seemed to have a good general knowledge... he was interested in things, in a wider kind of thing that you wouldn't expect that type of student to be interested in... just general world knowledge. He knew a lot about Greece, he obviously was picking up that kind of thing, but things that adults would be interested in, news, things that were happening in the news; and I suspect that he was part of adult conversations, and so he would pick up..." (Teacher's interview, June 1988).

In grade 3, the teacher brought in some articles about the Greek-Turkish conflict (April 1987). Although the class had a large percentage of Greek children, 10 out of 17 within the grade 3 section of the split grade 3/4 class, Ari was the only one up-to-date with the events, even had a formed opinion about them (see PROLOGUE). The "opinion" was obviously his parents' and was rather one-sided, however that showed clearly that Ari was treated as an equal member of the family and was taking part in the family conversations. It is quite customary in the Greek culture to include boys in the adult circle; with Ari, this inclusion appeared to be at a different level than with other children, actually on an almost equal footing with the other members of his family.

Bilingualism.

Like most of his classmates and friends from a Greek background, Ari is proficiently bilingual. According to data collected during interviews with his parents (December 1986 and June 1988), Ari was exposed exclusively to Greek until he was 2 years old. His parents and grandparents continued to address him in Greek, however the interaction with older brother Spiros featured both Greek and English. At age 4 1/2, Ari was enrolled in day care for a 6 month period; the only language spoken there was English. He attended Johnson School from Junior Kindergarten up to the middle of grade 4.

Starting from grade 1, Ari was a student in a private Heritage Language school where he took Greek classes every Saturday for 3 hours. Later on, he also participated in Greek dance classes for an hour every Sunday, classes also conducted in Greek.

During his pre-school years, Ari's father often told him stories in Greek, about the history of Greece and mythology. On occasion, his father would also borrow from the library and read to the child books about Greek history, both in Greek and in English. His mother provided help with assignments for Greek school, while his brother assisted him with English homework. There were also the occasional letters received and sent to Greece, with the correspondence alternating between Greek and English.

A December 1985 entry in the child's profile characterizes Ari as "quite fluent in reading and speaking Greek". He was observed to speak Greek to his classmates, but only for short periods of time, usually switching to English. Asked about his own language preference in reading and writing, Ari indicated English for both. He deemed Greek school as important:

> "If I get a job, like a doctor... Greek people and English people will come; and some people talk in Greek, some people talk in English, and we have to know both languages." (Child interview, spring 1987).

By the time of this interview, in grade 3, Ari was going to Greek school Mondays and Wednesdays for 2 hours, and Saturday for 3 hours. He reported learning Greek, Greek numbers, Greek things, Math, English: "We have a book, we read stories and then we have these questions to answer... in English". Interviewed in June 88, when Ari was already in his new school in Scarborough, the mother specified that Ari was going to Greek school on Saturdays only. It is not clear what caused the return to the once-a-week schedule, the child not being available for discussions anymore by that time. Ari was not available as well for the Greek language assessment, therefore there is no data on his present performance in Greek.

As mentioned earlier, the child was very aware and up-to-date on events concerning Greek affairs, both from participating in his family's discussions, and probably from frequenting together with his family various Greek Community events. This again became obvious when, in grade 4, the class was engaged in a large-scale unit on the Olympics. Ari did extensive research in the library, also perused carefully the newspaper for any mention of the Olympics and contributed greatly to the class effort, both orally, during class discussions, and in writing, with pieces written on the topic.

Teachers' evaluations (report cards and interviews).

Ari entered Year 1 of the project in grade 2, with the following comment from his grade 1 teacher: "Ari is a bright and eager student who can do well next year with careful work." (Grade 1 report, June 1985). His grade 1 teacher evaluated him to be at grade 2 level both in reading and math at the end of grade 1, listed him as "Satisfactory" for all subjects except for Reading comprehension and Speaking Skills, where she accorded him"Very Good". She offered the following comments:

> "A big improvement... he often finished too quickly without doing his best... He concentrates only a short time on a task before wanting to do something else... Comprehension of what he hears and reads is very good... Concepts in his stories are interesting and varied but often is too rushed to put down his ideas carefully... His number concepts.. are strong and his work usually well done..." (Grade 1 report, June 1985)

The seeds of future problems are already visible in an otherwise positive and encouraging report: finishes too quickly, concentrates only a short time, too rushed to put down his ideas carefully; math work is praised with no "but"s. However, the teacher gives Ari a grade 2 rating at the end of grade 1. At the end of grade 2, his rating is: Reading -2, Math 2. Either the rating system is not consistent across grades, or this is a severe warning that something is going wrong. However, it does not appear that anybody picked up any signs; his grade 2 report (June 86) reads: "Ari has made steady progress in grade 2... Ari's written work continues to improve... Ari has participated with enthusiasm in our environmental studies program. He is learning to use the library to research projects independently." Although the teacher makes such remarks as: "He needs to be encouraged to listen attentively during group discussions and comment meaningfully... He requires help to use the skills he has to decode new words... It is sometimes difficult to read what he has written". Ari is promoted to grade 3 with no questions asked.

One of the teachers commented once on the fact that she would always check a child's previous report when writing her own report, in order not to contradict it (personal communication). It is noteworthy that nobody worried about the fact that Ari's level at the end of grade 2 was lower in Reading than the level at the end of grade 1, and equal in Math.

Entering grade 3, Ari received a first report in November 86; Math, Environmental Studies, Music, Arts, and Phys Ed were at "satisfactory" level. In Reading, he is labelled as "beginning 2", a level consistent with his previous grade 2 evaluation, with comments like: "does not seem to read for comprehension, poor decoding skills, lacking in reading strategies"; in language, listening and speaking skills are judged as "satisfactory", however writing skills and spelling are again "unsatisfactory, beginning grade 2".

The January report keeps the "language" area at the lowest level of evaluation, with the exception of "speaking" and "silent/recreational reading", which are moved towards the "high"area. The teacher comments on his short attention span and on his needing supervision in order to produce work. His reading is analyzed from phonetic and analytic points of view:

> "Areas of weakness are in phonetic analysis, final d/b, br, dr, tr, th; short vowels e, i; initial d/b; structural analysis -- matching words with meanings; auditory vocabulary as well as literal and inferential comprehension. Ari's reading is hesitant, especially when encountering new words. He wants to be told rather than trying to unlock words on his own. He lacks reading strategies. Spelling is at late one (level)."

By the end of grade 3 (June 87 report), Ari is evaluated as "high 2" in Reading and "mid 3" in Math. The teacher shares her concern about his progress in language: "His reading is below grade level... It lacks fluency and expression... Has difficulty mainly with vowel sounds. Written stories contain short repetitive sentences. Spelling is phonetic". But also: "Ari is a very good participant in discussions. Makes pertinent comments... He is at grade level in computation and functioning at mid three in concepts and problem solving." She also found that Ari was mostly off task, except when working on some kind of art or crafts activity: "He is more on task when he deals with art"; on other occasions: "In September, he was totally out of it, it was just "I don't know why I am here"... He is immature, he still wants to play more... He doesn't want to be restricted by the limits of the classroom."(Teacher's interview, June 87)

In grade 4, the problems become major. There is no report card to substantiate the official comments about Ari -- the first semester report card went with the child to his new school, however there is a lot of "reporting" found in the interview with the classroom teacher:

> "Ari was very weak in reading and spelling... He had lots of ideas, he just couldn't do the written work... He could come up with some good topics, and he did understand a bit about them. But he never understood what he didn't know about them... The written language was really holding him back.
>
> His language was very bad, and when we were doing the grade 3 spelling... he had a great deal of trouble even memorizing the spelling words from the grade three speller... Even when he had studied them... he was not doing well.
>
> I think his problems in written language are very severe... His oral language is very good... his English was good, not the least bit broken... Math was weak, but not impossible."

Testing and formal assessments.

During his three years as a project child, Ari was assessed in a number of ways, both by his teachers and by members of the project team. The following instruments were used: SOLOM (Student Oral Language Observation Matrix) and Math concepts (see APPENDIX 2), administered by a Research Officer and the classroom teacher in grade 2, and by the classroom teacher only in grades 3 and 4; L1 tests at the beginning of grade 2 and the end of grade 4, designed and administered by a Greek-speaking Research Officer[4]; tests in Math Computation, Word Problems, Oral Reading, Silent Reading Comprehension (Recall and Inference), designed and/or compiled, and administered by a member of the project team in November and June of Year 2 and Year 3 of the project.

GRADE 2.

At the end of grade 2, the classroom teacher evaluated Ari at a low- medium level, by awarding him four 2s and three 3s on a scale from 1 to 5 on the SOLOM; 3s and 4s on a scale of 1 to 5, on the Math Concepts.

GRADE 3.

The grade 3 evaluations are quite similar to the grade 2 ones, although slightly lower in Math. The SOLOM oscillates between 2s and 3s, with most items marked both with 2 and 3; the Math Concepts includes also 2s and 3s, however the number of 3s is double the number of 2s.

The tests conducted by the project team member provide raw scores as well as the researcher's comments on the child's behaviour during the testing period. In grade 3, Ari was tested twice: once in the fall of 1986 and once in the spring of 1987. The raw scores offer information only by comparison with the other members of the cohort, rather than in an absolute way, due to the fact that the original standardized tests were extended and modified to make them more appropriate for the needs of the project.

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[4] Because Ari left the school before the end of the year, he missed the final L1 test

In Math, Ari's scores are comparable to the other five children in his group: in Math Computation, he scored 92 within a cohort range of 83 to 93 (fall 86), and 91 within a cohort range of 82 to 99 (spring 87); in Word Problems he received 16 within a cohort range of 12 to 18 (fall 86) and 17 with the rest of the cohort ranging between 18 to 21 (spring 87).

In Language tests, the picture changes considerably. In grade 3, he receives a rating of Low Grade 2 for Oral Reading, while the other children range from Mid Grade 3 to Low Grade 6. In raw scores, this corresponds to a score of 2.2 for Ari, with the other children ranging from 3.8 to 6.2 (fall 86) and a score of 2.5 for Ari with the rest of the cohort ranging between 3.5 to 6.2 (spring 87); for Silent Reading Comprehension, Ari scores 6 for Recall -- the other children range between 15 and 24 (fall 86 and spring 87), while for Inference he scores 7 (fall 86) -- the others range between 11 and 24 --, and 8 (spring 87) -- the others range between 16 and 27.

The researcher testing Ari gives positive comments on his behaviour: "Worked conscientiously and with a positive attitude even when he found the work difficult."

GRADE 4.

Ari left the school after the winter break, so the testing for this year is incomplete. His classroom teacher completed the SOLOM and Math Concepts evaluations, based on his performance during the first part of the year. The Project testing was performed for Fall 87 but did not occur for Spring 88. The L1 assessment planned for Spring 88, could not be carried out. Nevertheless, the existing documents offer some information on Ari's performance as measured by the various instruments.

The classroom teacher gave Ari three 4s and four 3s on the SOLOM, the higher evaluations being for Casual Social Conversation, Social Fluency, and Grammar. The Math Concepts accords seven 2s, with a 1 for Sequence ("cannot arrange one place decimals in order") and two 4s for Confidence and Concept of Time.

The project researcher came up with a pattern similar to the grade 3 one. The results in Math are equivalent with the results of the other children in the cohort, while the Language testing shows a noticeable gap between Ari and the rest of the group. For Math Computation, Ari scored 99 within a range of 95 to 100; for Word Problems, he achieved 21 within a range of 19 to 21. In Oral Reading, he scored a mid grade 2 -- 2.5 with the others ranging 4.8 to 6.6; in Silent Reading Comprehension, Ari was evaluated 8 for Recall with a cohort range of 19 to 28, and 8 for Inference with a cohort range of 16 to 33.

The researcher's comments provide an insight into Ari's working behaviour during the testing:

> "Ari was very friendly, chatty, charming, and personable. This term, Ari was much better able to maintain attention. He worked diligently, carefully and independently. In math computations, he demonstrated a methodical, stepwise approach to questions he found difficult. In silent reading comprehension, Ari was thoughtful, rereading the story and giving thoughtful answers. But when the material became too difficult, he was easily able to say it was too hard and he didn't know."

In the classroom.

Ari was "one of the boys". In each grade, he had a solid group of friends, some of them moving with him from grade to grade. His grade 2 teacher writes in his January 86 report card: "He relates well to his peers and is able to cooperate and compromise with them". His grade 4 teacher characterizes him as a "social creature": "He was friends pretty well with all the boys." (Teacher's interview, June 88). As opposed to most boys his age, Ari got along with girls as well; an entry in the child's profile (December 18, 86) reports on Ari sharing a game with Nektaria as well as with Amy. An earlier entry (July 86) specifies: "Ari will play most of the time (and work with) boys. But also he will also work with girls. His friends are both Greek and English speaking children." (Amy is Chinese).

In spite of his friendliness and popularity, Ari had to be seated very often on his own, rather than as part of a group. There are two versions for this, his teacher's and his own.

> "At the beginning of the year, I lay down the rules. I say: "Look, you can sit with friends, you can sit wherever you want, but you have to show me that you can be on task, wherever you are. But when the talking goes overboard, when they are not working, and wasting a lot of time... then I isolate them. And they know that they can go back with the group once they show me that they can be on task again. And he (Ari) did; it took him a while but he did, so I put him back in the group. Sure enough, back in the group, he becomes so totally distracted by everybody else... he's the kind of kid that can't do something if he has X number of kids around him, he's just too distracted by them. So that's why he is back on his own." (Teacher's interview, June 87).

Ari acknowledged that his teacher moved him because he talked too much, but he remained convinced that the main reason for this was that some of the grade 4 children were copying from him.

Various classroom incidents and anecdotes shed light on Ari as a member of the classroom community and as a learner; the following extracts from classroom observations and transcripts from classroom audiotapes illustrate his everyday endeavours.

GRADE 2.

It is a spring day, in the morning.

> 09:20
>
> The teacher asks Nektaria to come and read in front of the class a book that has jokes. Ari is listening. The kids are laughing. Ari seems to like it but he does not seem to be overexcited about it. The kids are replying to the jokes. Ari is only listening. The teacher is also laughing at the jokes that Nektaria is reading.
>
> 09:29
>
> Nektaria finished reading the book. The teacher went on explaining to them that they could also do painting if they wanted. The kids that wanted to do painting would do their writing, math, etc., after painting. Ari chose to do painting first.

Here we have Ari, the little adult, listening to jokes, but not laughing at them. This is a pattern that will repeat over and over in later years. Although very much a part of the group, Ari often behaves like an adult and does not participate in "childish" endeavours.

In the second paragraph, Ari, together with the rest of the class, is offered a choice between academic subjects and art. With no hesitation, the child chooses art and proceeds to devote all his attention to this acivity up until the time the teacher requests him to return to the classroom and start reading. Throughout later observations, Ari will always choose art over other options and will pursue his work with utter concentration and seriousness.

Writing samples collected in grade 2 reflect his special academic abilities and weakness. A page of additions and substractions with one and two digits is checked with no mistakes -- Ari is good at math computations; entries in his journal show a hesitant printer and speller:

> March 14 1986
>
> One MoNiNg at scool I Fall and I ht my lag and I wat to The Nrs and I MN My wak and I want to hom and I rastaD
>
> March 22 1986
>
> Today I saw a Big Dog and I PaDit It was a Dovmt has Nam was spake a he Bakt and Bakt He was 7.

In spite of obvious problems, the communicative competence is there; the reader understands the message, the entries have a logical sequence, and the events are related in a narrative way. The capitals have no functions within the sentence, their occurrence can either signal a new sentence or lack of control of some letters. The invented spelling reflects the pronunciation quite closely -- some of the vowels are replaced with phonetically credible ones, while the missing vowels are either lax ones (*ht* for *hit*), or *schwa* (*Nrs* for *Nurse*). The lack of *r* sounds probably corresponds to the dialect of English the child was exposed to (*MoNiNg*, *BakT*). A nice touch is the spelling for *barked*, where Ari reproduces the actual final sound which is pronounced in this word.

As the teacher's evaluation indicates, the child is within normal range of competence for his grade at this point, with some weakness beginning to manifest itself in the written language.

Ari is promoted to grade 3, a split grade classroom with both grade 3 and grade 4 children.

GRADE 3.

A first observation of Ari in grade 3 finds him sitting by himself at a desk near the teacher's desk, and quite content with the situation. Ari spends the afternoon working on art, creating two pieces of work by the end of the period. First, he reproduces from memory a drawing centered around a shark. The drawing has excellent detail and colours, and is very explicit; there is an original text attached to it "Sharks do not go hunting for people but people do."

A little later on, Ari moves outside the classroom and proceeds to execute a large-scale painting on the same theme. The activity is intense, well-planned, serious. Here, we have an artist at work, an artist completely immersed in what he is doing. The sequence of his work is logical, his concentration is complete and dense.

01:49

Ari leaves the room with a big plastic sheet. He goes out in the hall and spreads the plastic sheet on the floor. He prepares a big sheet of white paper that he puts on the floor on top of the plastic sheet. He takes paint from containers and puts some into jars, then adds water from the faucet.... Ari prepares green, black and red paint in 3 jars. Then he takes a brush and washes it in the sink. He behaves as if he has done this before and knows what he is doing.

01:54

He starts preparing blue paint and runs out of it. He tells me that he is going to take some from the other class' supply cupboard. He goes to the set of cupboards close to the next classroom and indeed finds the right colour. He pours it into the blue jar and now has 4 colours. He groups them together and puts them into a plastic bin. He takes a glass jar and fills it with water and puts it also into the plastic bin near the paints. He picks a brush from a jar and explains to me the different sizes of brushes.

01:56

Ari kneels on the floor and paints one thick line of blue. He gets up and says that he needs the book; he goes to the classroom and returns with his book. He opens it and puts it on the sheet near the paint bin; then, he resumes painting.

01:59

A boy passes nearby and comments: "You are always painting pictures." He leaves. Ari resumes painting.

02:00

Ari is painting in black the shape of a submarine which is at the top of the picture. I ask him if he likes painting. He answers with a rich "Yeah!". Then he tells me that he likes best reading, painting and math.

02:02

Ari gets up and dips his brush in a jar of yellow paint. He starts painting a diver in red and realizes that the colour is not quite right. The diver is well designed, with an air tank on his back. Now, Ari starts drawing the shark. He has precise movements and draws well.

Later on, Ari plays with Amy, a grade 4 Chinese girl. The game, Mastermind, uses coloured pins. To give Amy a hint, Ari tells her that he uses "criminal" colours when using black and white pins. Amy returns the gesture by giving her partner a hint about her colours and calls them "Christmas" colours. Ari, however, finds a yellow among the colours used by Amy and protests over their qualifier; yellow is not a "Christmas" colour. "Cold" is accepted as an attribute of blue and white.

Classroom observation, March 9, 87:

"(Ari) was working on some arts and crafts project as a follow up to a reading task. It is obvious where Ari's priorities are: he is definitely good at crafts and manages to use any opportunity to direct his activities in this direction... During this observation, Ari was putting the finishing touches on a house that he was building as a follow up for a reading. At one point, a classmate reminded him that he should do his reading at this time; Ari replied that THIS was his reading.

...During this observation, he chose to work on math, and later on reading (by working on his craft). However, when analyzing my files, it became apparent that he was wasting an awful amount of time, just chatting with his friends... During his math work, he was off task most of the time, while during his craft activity, he was on task all the time.

... Ari took out a hockey book from the library, to work on a project on goalies. Eventually, I found out that the project is for "English" in Greek school. Apparently, Greek school includes Greek, Math and English."

Later the same morning, Ari is sitting at a table with two boys and two girls; they each work at the same math assignment on an individual basis. The research officer engages in a conversation with him:

RO - research officer
A - Ari

There are coloured plastic cubes on the table.

RO: Do you just need them for helping out?

A: Yeah just for helping a little (voice level lowers)
But I don't need no help (decided) . because I do math in Greek school and .. you know .
I- . I know my Greek school like they teach us <all that> in Greek school...

RO: You do the same kind of math in Greek school that you do here?

A: Yeah .

RO: Is it harder or easier?

A: Harder . way harder

RO: Way harder
Doesn't it confuse you doing it in Greek school and doing it here also?

A: Well it's the same thing .. but- but it's a little bit harder in Greek school

...

A: ... Well like at Greek school like we do everything

RO: Uhuh
Like what?

A: Uh like we do math (intonation rising=starting list) .. we do English and we do Greek..

RO: You do English in Greek school?

A: Yeah

...

RO: And who teaches you English in Greek school
Is it the Greek teacher?

A: N- Yeah
it's the Greek teacher .

RO: who teaches you

A: Yeah

His grade 3 teacher is surprised to find out that Ari is doubling his math and English instruction through Greek school. However, she is quick to point out advantages and disadvantages:

> "I don't mind that they do math in Greek school, because if it's going to help the kids out, and if they are going to understand the concept, there is no problem there... If they would teach the concept with the straight facts, that's OK. If they learn the multiplication times table, that's all right, there is nothing wrong with that, because they can always transfer that to English... They don't do enough problem solving type thing, it seems to me that it's mostly computation.
>
> ..The method is just memorization. And it's paper and pencil math.
>
> ...That's what the parents want, though. This is the kind of schooling that they grew up with and that's what they feel is the right kind... We always have to fight here at Johnson. We're trying to tell parents: "Look! Fine, your kid knows multiplication table 9 times 9, but they don't understand the concept of multiplication"." (Teacher's interview, June 1987)

Writing samples from grade 3 present the picture of a boy with serious problems in spelling and printing.

The following is an extract from a story written in March 87, entitled "Center Ice" and dealing with one of Ari' favourite occupations: hockey.

> IT Hapind vare Fast I was aN My car waTing to go skating. Win I Fell Down Throu My chir and Down I was NI MaPoL LeiF Gars
>
> I was oN The ice I was rait iN The wy of The ciNing Tric
>
> The Trais was haiDing TorD Me One of The Hockey Plairs savD me...

The various spelling simplifications reflect the oral language as the child hears it (Gars for *Gardens*, Tord for *toward*, Plairs for *players*, Hapind for *happened*, savD for *saved*); *hockey* and *skating* are familiar words but, surprisingly enough, "Maple Leaf Gardens" is not.

The penmanship is insecure and awkward, and well below the level of penmanship of most of his classmates. The story is exquisitely illustrated with detailed and explicit pictures; one can't help wondering why Ari's obvious artistic ability, acknowledged by each one of his teachers, could not have been harnessed to generate a higher level of penmanship.

A project on "Big Cats" exhibits almost perfect spelling, except for some occasional misuse of capitals, however it is obvious that the information is gleaned and copied verbatim from library sources. Compared with the spelling found in Ari's original writings, we get the picture of a child interested in the topic and attentive enough to reproduce the text carefully; also having the necessary skills to do so.

A booklet "All about me" provides huge illustrations and very little text. Where his classmates chose to give detailed insights into their family and school life, Ari offers very scant information, impeccably spelled and typewritten, clearly through the intermediary of a helpful parent volunteer or of the teacher:

> "This is me."
>
> (The accompanying picture shows a boy shooting a basket under a huge sun and some clouds. With a nice sense of humour, Ari reproduced in the middle of the page a miniaturized version of this page, complete with drawing and text.)
>
> "My dad bought a house and he is buying me a bike."
>
> "I like to play hockey. My hobby is playing hockey."
>
> "My second hobby is playing soccer."
>
> "I like playing wrestling."
>
> ...
>
> "I have a waterbed. It is fun to play on a waterbed."

The grade 3 teacher recommended that Ari be tested for possible learning disabilities, also she expressed her apprehension about the child being promoted to grade 4, forseeing possible future problems. The parents did not agree with her, and Ari was promoted to grade 4, with no mention in any official document about his potential learning problems.

GRADE 4.

Classroom observation, November 87:

> "Ari sits by himself, like in grade 3. The teacher is quite upset with him, today she criticized him for wasting 25 minutes to find an eraser. It looks like there is trouble there.
>
> Ari wrote a story about the Olympic Games in Calgary. It is a very nationalistic story, with lots of emphasis on the history of the Games, rooted in Greece. Ari appears to be very proud of his heritage."

From classroom observation on the same day:

09:05

The teacher starts talking about the class being interested in the Olympics. There were articles and pictures in the paper, and the kids had their eyes open and brought things in. The teacher shows the pictures to the class, colourful pictures from the Sun. The teacher asks the children whether they recognize anything in the pictures; children mention the Olympic symbols, torch, etc. Ari tells about having seen the torch on TV last night... Ari knows that the torch is lit in Greece with the sun's light.

...

09:10

...She (the teacher) continues that there are two special people who took part in the lighting of the torch, previous Olympic winners... Ari gets excited, he knows again; he read about it but forgot the name."

...

10:04

The teacher calls Ari to read his story, which came out of what they were talking about yesterday. Ari reads his story about the Olympics. It is a one page story, which traces the story of the Olympics from Greek antiquity to Calgary. He reads well and clearly. His writing was not very good, I looked at his story as he was writing. His reading, however, is confident and convincing. The teacher praises him.

In grade 4, Ari is still "one of the boys". He is being observed working with Alex on grade 3 spelling; one dictates, the other writes, then they switch around. When Ari is the "dictator", he takes his role very seriously: he reads the words from a book, supervises Alex's words and corrects him when necessary. With himself as the "writer", he conscientiously points out to the teacher, who is passing by, the words he had trouble with -- dragon, Saturday, and holiday -- and proceeds to practise them on the carpet using his finger as a writing tool.

Later on, he collaborates with Alex and Tom in collating an extensive list of "things" related to Christmas and writing them down on a large piece of paper. The collaboration works quite smoothly, considering the different characters and "ego"s involved:

09:36

Ari. Alex and Tom have formed a group and they are working together. Ari goes off for a short time to bring markers.

...

09:42

The three boys are working well together, stopping to giggle once in a while. Ari complains once to the teacher that Tom is writing in pen and making all these mistakes.

...

09:45

...The boys turn around and read something on the wall. They are obviously fishing for inspiration. Tom says: "hot chocolate" and writes it quickly. Alex offers "tobogganing" and Tom opposes it. Ari wants "Christmas dinner", then "decorations", and Alex approves quickly. Tom comments that he doesn't know how to spell it, and Ari starts spelling the letters of the word...

09:48

The teacher passes by and looks at what they are doing. She realizes that the boys have trouble with spelling and tells them not to avoid words that they can't spell, they should put down any ideas they have and not worry about spelling. She leaves, and Ari offers and writes "Christmas joy"... Next, "lights" is offered and put in. Then "Santa", Ari insists, but Tom doesn't want it. Ari has Christmas shopping and that gets Tom's approval.

This short scene of power play puts in perspective the various roles and potentials of each one of the kids involved in this group. Tom, the most powerful, is the one that claims the ultimate decision rights; Alex is the least powerful personnage. Ari, in the middle, assumes the upper hand in his relationship with Alex and provides him with help in spelling. Whether he is the better speller of the two -- both function below grade level -- or he is over-confident in his own abilities is irrelevant; Ari has a self-image which exudes trust in his own potential.

Where so many children do not succeed because they do not believe in their own ability to succeed, Ari has the advantage of believing in himself (earlier, we came across the incident where Ari, in grade 3 and functioning at a low grade 2 level, believed that he was sitting by himself because the grade 4 children were copying from him).

His writing samples in grade 4 show some improvement over the previous grades, but fall far from being comparable to the average grade 4 student's writing. Here is a story that Ari wrote about the Olympics; the information is taken from various texts and therefore the spelling would be expected to be fairly correct.

Olympic Games in Calgry.

Long ago Befor The BiBLL The Greeces Hald The OLyPic Games in OLyPa They run aLL arown Greece wiTh The TorTh To TaLL Greece (*a correction inserted here changes this word to Greeke; I assume the child wanted to write Greek and failed to delete the final e*) PeoPLe ThaT The OLympic Games Hav sTarDiD. The Games wer The Javin Thero anD SatPot anD Diskus anD PolvTing 1988 OLympic Games The Games wiLL Br Hald Fib 13 1988 The Torty is on its way To Calgary. The Games wiLL Be seS Racing anD skieing anD Maye More Games

Examining this piece of writing -- that Ari read to the class with enthusiasm and confidence – one can't help wondering why a child with a good command of the language, with intelligence and curiosity, has not been helped already to overcome an obvious learning handicap.

Ari presents himself as an extremely conscientious student, polite, well-mannered, almost adult in behaviour; answers nicely, appears to be well-read and up to date. Unfortunately, this is a deceptive facade. The child still has serious language problems, although his oral output is fluent and pleasant; his writing is well below grade level; his reading is insufficient and sporadic. He is getting a parallel education in Greek school because his parents don't trust the school system and they want to make sure that their son is getting a good education elsewhere. The teacher thinks that the parents are trying too hard to help Ari, and that this is not working to his advantage; she feels that the parents equate "bright" with "good in school". According to her observations so far, Ari should not have been promoted to grade 4, actually some of his work is still at a grade 2 level. As from January, the teacher arranged for Ari to start in a Reading Clinic class; in her report card, she suggested that Ari repeat grade 4. The protocol requires teachers to inform parents in the December report card when there is a possibility of their child having to repeat a grade.

At the beginning of 1988, the teacher found out that Ari had been moved to another school; the parents, having decided that it was in the child's interest to move him from this school, blamed all his academic problems on the school's failure to teach him. The teacher was not consulted or even informed of this decision. Justifiably, she felt offended, and especially worried about Ari's academic future: not only will he have to cope with his own learning problems, but he will also have to adapt to a new environment in the middle of the year.

The parents claimed that Ari was doing much better in the new school; if he didn't complete his work in class, he had to stay in an extra 45 minutes; he also received homework (personal communication). They refused to allow the project to inquire about Ari in his new school.

The teacher had the following comments:

> "...We heard via the grapevine that he was doing extremely well and he was really happy there. But then, just about three weeks ago, we got a call from Scarborough that said: "What on earth were you doing with this kid? What should we be doing with him?" They didn't realize that he had been recommended for Reading Clinic; that suggests to me that he was not doing well, and that it had taken them three months to find out that he wasn't doing well. And to realize that he was a kid in trouble. So I think that she (the mother) hasn't gained anything by taking him, and I think it's a shame, because we met him in the school yard and he looked like he really wished he was still with us... I didn't ask him any questions about his academic (progress), just hoped that he liked it and said we really missed him, and he looked so pleased... He's a lovely boy... and I wonder if she (the mother) did the right thing by yanking him... but it's her child." (Teacher's interview, June 88)

Ari's views on learning.

Ari is a "pleaser"; a nice child who tries very hard to give the answers that he thinks adults expect him to give.

In grade 2, Ari provided the following information about himself: he liked "doing work" (math, English, printing, reading), he had no dislikes (he liked everything in school), he found writing easy and printing difficult; given a choice, he would pick writing picture stories; he came to school "to learn". (Informal interview with a Research Officer, November 1985)

The Research Officer reporting on this interview felt that Ari was trying to impress her: "He is trying hard to please the R.O., trying to give a good impression"; actually, the child enumerated all the items that he believed an adult would consider essential for efficient school work.

The information about Ari's opinions about school and learning during grade 3 emerges from two main sources: a) classroom observations and informal chats during regular class time, and b) a formal standardized interview designed by the Project team members.

A December 1986 conversation includes Ari's listing as his favourite subjects reading, math and drawing. During a March 1987 observation, Ari, building a house for a follow-up on a reading assignment, described this task as "reading". These two pieces of information give an interesting insight into the workings of Ari's mind: leaving out math, which we know that the child is very good at so far, we are left with reading and drawing; on the first occasion, they are listed parallel to each other, on the second one, they are fused together. Ari has a nice concept of language and art as a whole and uses art, at which he is a budding expert, as an extension of language, a discipline which gives him some trouble already, at least in its written form. Ari is not an avid reader; he is definitely not a proficient writer. But he accepts literature and plunges into it wholeheartedly; he also turns to art to help him reach personal goals.

The answers in the formal interview sketch a picture of a child fully aware of his shortcomings as well as of the importance of a good education, a view strongly supported by his family and the school. Asked about the usefulness of reading and writing, Ari answers: "So you can learn and get a good education." On his self-evaluation as a reader: "I don't think that I am a very, very, very good reader, but I can read a little bit, like I read good a little, little. (A good reader) would know how to read books very well and hardly make mistakes, I make lots of mistakes." Most difficult about reading: "Those big words that mean difficult things."

We already know that Ari likes to write; especially, he likes gathering information about a topic and illustrating his text. He has the courage to choose as a favourite subject one he finds difficult. Very often, children equate "easy" with "favourite", and "difficult" with "least liked" subjects; Ari understands that he can like a subject he might have trouble with.

The following is a self-description of the process of writing: "First I pick up my pencil, I make sure my page is clean.. then I start writing, I finish, I close my book and I put it in the bin. My teacher checks it and if I have something wrong, she gives it back to me and I correct it. I put it back in the bin, my teacher corrects it, if it's not right, I have to do that all over again. (When it's completely finished)... I have to do something else."

Here we have a child describing writing as an exercise in correcting mistakes; the whole issue of topics and content is not even considered. The child is used, however, to work on a piece of writing with the teacher; asked about the meaning of the word "conferencing", Ari defines it "when you talk to the teacher about the story and you fix the story up", however he does not see this activity as part of a creative process. A good piece of writing is one that is "correct". Having experienced the environment of this particular classroom, with its emphasis on creativity and imagination, it is plausible to detect here the influence of another more rigid learning framework, where being "correct" and following the rules takes priority over the creative process of writing. One starts perceiving the possible influence of a learning environment other than the classroom, an environment with different norms and values; as described earlier, Ari gets his education from two learning institutions -- "English" school and Greek school -- which both offer him English and Math, among other subjects; the two schools do not communicate and make no attempt to coordinate or even compare the content of their instruction.

In discussions with the Research Officer, Ari declares that he likes school; his preferred subjects are "writing stories and science". He has no academic dislikes, finds math the easiest and science most difficult. He considers Greek school important, but likes English school better; however, he acknowledges the fact that Greek school helps him with English school, although the math that he is being taught there is different.

Most of the children from a Greek ethnic background came forward with the same view of Greek school: they considered it important, but they questioned the teaching methodology of its classrooms. According to their ages and degrees of linguistic sophistication, they were able to articulate general or specific reasons for their "criticism": from "liking better English school" all the way to detailed descriptions of the differences in the approach to pedagogy and curriculum. Like his peers, Ari is also able to express his feelings on this matter, however he cannot specify what is "different". As we have seen earlier, one of the teachers was able to put her finger on it: "They don't do enough problem solving type thing... it's mostly computation."

With no doubts whatsoever about the importance of Heritage Language schools, also about the advantage of growing up bilingual and bicultural, one cannot but speculate about how much more these children would benefit from these classes, were they conducted with some degree of harmony with the methodology and curriculum of the "English" school. Even Ari, aged 8 years old, thought so.

Ari's parents' views on school and learning.

The other "institution" that Ari gets his education from, and maybe the most important one at this age, is his family. We have seen earlier the role of the family in the make-up of the Greek Community, also I have discussed the environment that Ari grew up in: caring and concerned parents, a supportive and helpful older brother, a family business where Ari is welcome and manages to make himself useful, both parents accessible -- because of the nature of the business -- practically at any time.

I have also discussed the views on education of the Greek Community, views rooted in the tradition and philosophy of another educational system. Ari's family, through the child's experience in school, is being confronted with a series of situations which are generally not favoured by the community: some of the teachers recommended that the child be tested, he was included in a split grade (3/4), he was recommended for Reading Clinic for extra help, two of his teachers suggested that he repeat a grade (both in grade 3 and grade 4).

Any one of these events would have been damaging to the self-esteem for a Greek family; having to confront four of them (although the split grade did not seem to cause any problems) caused an impassable breach between family and school.

One of the first differences in views was over the issue of homework. In the lower grades, the children receive practically no homework, however they are encouraged to take books home and to do research for projects on their own. The parents do not recognize this kind of behaviour as "homework": homework is written exercises and memorizing. The children receive a sizeable amount of homework from Greek school, with the parents usually involved in helping them. For "English" school, either there is no homework in the sense the parents can identify with, or they feel inadequate to participate in its preparation; older siblings take over this task and provide help and direction.

Ari's parents were not happy with the amount of homework that he was getting in school; they felt there should be more of it, especially in spelling, reading and math. After moving Ari to his new school, the mother offered as a major change in his education the fact that he had more homework.

In a first interview (December 1986), Ari's mother expressed her wish for Ari "to be a good person, to love people, to love his family", also to go to university or college. A June 1988 interview designates her goals for the child's education as "to go as far as he can, to learn what his parents couldn't learn". It is obvious that the family want Ari to have the best education available.

Ari already had reading problems in the early grades. His grade 2 teacher commented on the fact that the child was not reading enough and did not seem to enjoy reading. She talked to the mother and made her aware of her responsibility in encouraging the boy to read.

While the teachers were relying on Ari's parents to give him support with his reading, the parents were trying but not insisting. Their older son did not do very well in school either and did not particularly like reading; with the pattern repeating itself with

Ari, the mother just shrugged her shoulders and decided that she could not force him to do something that he didn't want to do; also she asserted that the school should make more effort "to teach them" (personal communication). Therefore, Ari is allowed to repeat his brother's behaviour, also, as a boy in the Greek community, he already has the right to somehow make his own decisions regarding his education.

When the grade 3 teacher suggested that Ari be tested, the family opposed it; they also did not agree for Ari to repeat grade 3. The teacher had to give in, but she felt that he would end up having to repeat in a higher grade, a fact which might cause more problems. The grade 4 teacher agreed with this diagnosis:

> "...and he will. And mother's attitude was that "My son was repeated at some stage, grade 5, grade 6, the older boy, and he didn't need to repeat, and he is an excellent student, and he is in a collegiate and he is getting great marks". She seemed to think that the same thing was going to happen to Ari, and I couldn't convince her that it wasn't necessarily so."

The mother felt that Ari was discriminated against because he was Greek: "Because he is Greek, they (the school) assume he is dumb." She also believed that he had a language problem because they spoke only Greek at home (personal communication). That this is not so has been proven over and over by other Greek-speaking children who perform very well in school, while speaking only Greek at home.

There seems to have been a regretable lack of communication between school and family, also a possible oversight. On the one hand, the parents refused to have Ari tested; on the other hand, the teachers might have alienated the parents by suggesting retention; the parents might not have been fully aware that testing and support in special areas of weakness, in this case language, were probably viable possibilities in the case of their child. Were a definable disability or learning lag to have been identified, it could have been corrected or improved through personal attention from a qualified professional; hence the issue of retention would not even have come up. Ari's ability in subjects other than written language has been proven, and his teachers considered him an intelligent child.

The issue of testing, although rejected by the parents, came up when Ari was already deep in trouble. After the child had been moved out of school, the grade 4 teacher commented:

> "... he had a lot of problems... I think he was very aware of his problems, and some of it was a cover-up. But I think he is an intelligent boy... he had a really severe learning problem. It was a real shame that something wasn't done sooner with that particular child." (Teacher's interview, June 1988)

The mother, on the other hand, claims that she tried to talk to the principal, and made lots of appointments; she could never get him, he never answered her calls. The same thing happened with the social worker; he encouraged her to call him any time, however he never returned her calls (personal communication). It is not clear whether she ever tried to contact the teacher; probably not, because the teacher was genuinely surprised when she found out that the child has been moved to another school.

Ari's cohort-mates: Nektaria and Mano.

Before we engage in a discussion of the issues arising from Ari's experiences as a learner, let us look briefly at other children from the same cohort and the same ethnic background, children who have received the same input from the same teachers as Ari and who have had the same classroom experiences. As we have seen before, Samantha's and Helen's experiences as learners have been quite positive and the prognosis as to their future academic development has been very encouraging.

Ari had as classmates (as well as school-mates and cohort-mates) two other children from the Greek ethnic group: Nektaria and Mano. The fourth Greek-speaking member of this cohort goes to another school, therefore he can not be considered as a "control" for the discussion of Ari's case. Both Nektaria and Mano were part of this study for its complete duration of three years. In grade 2 and grade 3, they were Ari's classmates. In grade 4, Mano was in a different classroom, a split grade 4/5, while Nektaria and Ari were together in a straight grade 4 class.

Let us meet these two children. Nektaria is a beautiful girl, with a warm engaging smile. She tries very hard to be loved, actually so hard that it backfires on her: on many occasions, she overwhelms and frightens off children with her intensity and her quest for friendship. Quite often, she will designate children as "best friends", replacing reality with her personal wish. In lower grades, she was seen coming to school with bruises and in unkempt clothes; it was hypothesized that her parents were very busy from early morning hours trying to make a living, and that Nektaria and her sisters tended to go neglected. In a home visit, the impression received by the visiting Research Officer was that of a mother concerned and proud of her daughter's achievements. Nektaria's older sisters were not very successful academically, and it is possible that, as a younger sister, she was benefitting from their knowledge of English -- while the older sisters had no English-speaking family members to rely upon -- and thus succeeding in school.

Mano, a born "raconteur", is a boy with an expressive face and an imagination that knows no boundaries. Over the years, he has entertained his teachers and classmates with his stories, jokes, riddles, anecdotes. Although not obsessed with academic achievement, Mano is a consistently solid and reliable student. As he was growing older, Mano tried to become less of an entertainer and more "like everybody else". Let us hope that he will never quite succeed, and that he will always keep alive his very special sparkling personality.

Both Nektaria and Mano are Canadian-born and each is the youngest of three siblings; Nektaria has two older sisters, while Mano has an older brother and an older sister. In both cases, the age difference between the younger and the two older siblings is 2 to 3 years. The two sets of parents have been in Canada between 18 and 21 years, a few years less than Ari's parents. None of these parents can be considered as new immigrants.

In both families, the parents completed only the 6 obligatory grades in school, with the exception of Mano's mother who continued up to grade 8. The two families live in the Danforth area; all 4 parents are working at blue-collar jobs. Like Ari, neither one of the children benefits from a large extended family: Mano's relatives are mostly in Greece, as are Nektaria's; Nektaria's grandmother, who was close to the family, died some time ago. The home language, for both households, is Greek; the siblings tend to use both English and Greek among themselves, and in both cases, the older children help with English schoolwork. The parents speak very little or no English, and the language that they use, when they have to, is at a strictly functional level.

Nektaria and Mano are fluently bilingual. In addition to using the Greek language at home, they are enrolled in Greek school; Nektaria attends a private school for a total of 9 hours a week, Mano takes his classes at a Board-sponsored school for a total of 6 hours a week. In addition to that, they take part in Sunday school classes at their church. In recent "first language" tests conducted by a Greek-speaking Research officer, Nektaria was evaluated at level 4 out of 5 ("having native-like control") in listening, speaking and reading, and level 3 ("can get by") in writing. Mano scored level 4 in listening and reading, and level 3 in speaking and writing.

During her three years as a "research project" child, Nektaria was ranked by her teachers as 3rd out of 23 in grade 2, 9th out of 17 in grade 3, and 8th out of 28 in grade 4. Mano was ranked 7th out of 23 in grade 2, 5th out of 17 in grade 3, and 5th out of 12 in grade 4. Although there is some fluctuation in the ranking -- different teachers will necessarily evaluate from different points of view -- the two children consistently maintained an honourable position within their classrooms.

Here are some of the comments from the various teachers who interacted with Nektaria and Mano over this 3 year period, comments gleaned from report cards and teachers' interviews.

Nektaria

Grade 2.

"Nektaria writes detailed and interesting stories and is able to express her ideas sequentially and logically."

"She expresses herself well...Nektaria reads with good oral expresion and is able to hold the attention of the class when reading to them."

Grade 3.

"Nektaria is reading slightly above grade level. She has good comprehension and fluency."

"Nektaria's stories show sequence, imagination, and good grammatical structure. Spelling is at grade level. Handwriting is neat with well-formed letters."

But also:

"She can, at times, be argumentative with peers. Oftentimes an adult is needed to resolve the argument. Homework has been forgotten on several occasions... Recreational reading needs to be encouraged. especially at home."

Informally, the teacher comments:

"... She is lower in math. she is insecure with math. she is not insecure with writing.

...There has been an awful lot of social problems with her. You put her in a group, and suddenly the group can't get along... I don't know why she feels she has to be so aggressive... Kids don't want to play with her."

Grade 4.

"Her skills are... very good at the grade 4 level... showing an ability to use imagination. She writes excellent short paragraphs on topics in which the content is organizing information or giving opinions.

...She has had much difficulty with multiplication and division... In areas such as problem solving and logic she needs some individual attention."

From the French teacher:

"...is often argumentative with peers; more effort is needed to practice cooperative skills."

From the classroom teacher's interview:

"She is a good writer. She writes very interesting stories, she writes plays. Her written language is good.... Very good at organizing her thoughts and putting them down... I think she has a very mature style of writing.

...At one point, I thought she couldn't do math at all... She is not strong in problem solving."

And also:

"I have never been able to figure out exactly what it is she does that irritates these people... She is very pushy and bossy... and she is very demanding sometimes."

Mano.

Grade 2.

"He has an excellent command of the English language and is able to understand the subtlety of humour. Mano's written stories have expanded from one or two sentences to one or two pages. His stories are well thought out and well concluded. Mano is a very entertaining participant in group discussions."

Grade 3.

> "Mano is reading at above grade level. He can read fluently and expressively with good comprehension... Written stories have very good sequencing, good flow of action with precise word choice for ideas. Fairly accurate spelling. Mano is quite good at revision of stories; he does this independently."

Comments on homework:

> "Assignments have been incomplete and occasionally left at home."

From teacher's interview:

> "...He is a bright little kid...he showed some really good progress in terms of my own testing in the class.
>
> ...For the first time at least in my class, I realized that he never had a partner... They love to listen to me, they love his stories, and yet, when it really comes down to making a choice, they don't want him...they are threatened by him, by his sense of humour, the fact that he can pick the characteristic of a person, write it out and talk about it.
>
> He does have some insecurities with math, although he pulled himself up very nicely... I think he is so afraid of not being able to do..."

Grade 4.

In grade 4, Mano was separated from his former classmates and placed in a male teacher's classroom; his grade 3 teacher felt that that particular environment would be appropriate for the child: "(The teacher) absolutely loves to joke around; and I think he will really appreciate Mano's humour, and Mano will appreciate (the teacher)'s humour as well." (Teacher's interview, June 1987)

His grade 4 teacher found Mano as being "strong verbally and able to play with the language", with improving written skills, good ideas and imaginative topics; his written fluency not at the level of his oral fluency. Assignments were rushed, in class and at home. He still had no close buddy, but was well accepted by his classmates.

From his report card:

> "Mano is currently reading well above grade level... Mano has shown marked improvement in daily spelling lessons... His creative writing shows imagination and flexibility...He experimented with several creative writing forms including letters, description. dialogue, poetry, story telling, etc... Mano presented very entertaining and effective oral presentations.
>
> ...Further effort is required to master multiplication facts.
>
> Mano needs to complete all assigned work."

Writing samples collected from the two children during their participation in our research project (see APPENDIX 1) support the opinions forwarded by their teachers. Let us read a few paragraphs from each one of these children and travel with them from grade to grade.

Nektaria.

Grade 2.

> "MY mom's THE BesT IN THE world BECUSE... 1 She is going to Driving schooL. 2 She Takes me To The plaza. 3 She Buy's me Toy's. 5 She Buy's me Book's you write in and crayons and pancil and rouler and chapiner and a earaser. 6 And she let's my Frieands over."

Grade 3.

Nektaria's stories take on epic proportions: From "The land that was made of rainbow" with 5 large pages, she moves on to "The magic coffin", 11 pages. Her stories are beautifully handwritten -- some shorter ones start moving on to the computer --, they are illustrated, and generally are a pleasure to read. Here is an extract from "The land that was made of rainbow":

> "I was walking along the sidewalk not paying any attention, when I fell through a sewer. I fell all the way down, down, down. When I landed, I saw a pot of gold. The gold got there by falling out of peoples' pockets. I was so happy to see it and rainbow colors, because rainbow colors are my favorite. But then, I noticed everything was made of rainbow. There was a sign that said, 'whoever stays for two minutes could turn into a rainbow colored person'..."

Grade 4.

In grade 4, Nektaria writes stories, dramatizes them, and then tries to have them staged with her classmates. She is also into poems, mysteries, and journal. "The mystery of the lost ring" is a chapter story, with numbered chapters and titles for each one. Here is an extract:

> "Chapter 3.
>
> Scruff's (*Scruff is a dog*) Adventure.
>
> Scruff had gone to a very fancy place and was going to meet his girlfriend that he hadn't seen for years. The queen had locked him in the dog room that the workers had made for Scruff but one time after the queen had left the room Scruff had left to go for a walk and had gotten back before the queen could notice him gone. But the queen didn't know that the dog was smart for he had little cameras that he put all around the palace-house. Later his girlfriend Jazmine and Scruff went to dinner but the guards spotted him and Jazmine."

Mano.

Although Mano is not such an expert and prolific writer as Nektaria, he makes up in imagination what he lacks in spelling and penmanship. Unfortunately, the samples collected in grade 2 have been typed and "fixed" by a helpful adult; the grade 3 and 4 samples are all original and unchanged.

Grade 3.

Mano rambles through a long story about what happened to him during "A Very Very Strange Dream". Here is the beginning, before it was corrected and edited with the teacher:

> "One sunny morning in the month of Juily, I was walking on my street and soudonly I fail throw the ground. Down and down I waint. As if I was falling into a bodomls pit. And then I hit botom. Bong!! I had landid in a place were avrithing is'ant normall like trees that were growing boots..."

Grade 4.

Besides stories and projects, Mano produced this short piece of wishful thinking:

> "IN THE FUTURE I WANT TO BE..
>
> A Rich person and I want to drive a gold plated limo with a ruby on the front of the hood. And I want to own a manchon that's bigger then casaloma and equeped with tennise courts and a large swimming pool. And I want to travel all around the world. And I want to own the Eiffel tower. And 50,000 do$ars in orange juice stokes.
>
> THE END"

Ari compared with his cohort-mates

After having made Nektaria's and Mano's acquaintance, and shared in their problems and successes, we return to Ari to have a second look at his performance and behaviour in the classroom, as well as at the input from home and community, this time projected against the performance and behaviour of other children of similar age and ethnic background, children who have shared the same classroom experiences as him and have benefitted from the same educational systems and philosophies. While discussing the various aspects of Ari's, Nektaria's and Mano's development within the school system, I will try to identify whether the issues are common to the three children, and by extension to other children with the same ethnic and cultural background, or whether they are particular to only some of them; if the latter proves to be the case, I will attempt to articulate more clearly the nature of these specific problems as encountered by Ari.

Let us start with a general comparison of the three children from the points of view of demographics, home environment, bilingualism, and school achievement.

	Ari	Nektaria	Mano
Demography	All three children are Canadian born. The three sets of parents have been in Canada between 18 and 26 years. They all live in the Danforth area (except for Ari for the second half of grade 4). Neither of the children has a large extended family in Canada. All three children are youngest in the family and benefit from help from an older sibling. All three children had an older sibling who has had academic problems in school.		
Socio-economic status	Parents own a store.	Parents work at blue-collar occupations.	
Parental input	Parents have some college education. Parents speak English fairly well. Parents do not trust the school and the teachers. Parents more involved in the child's education.	Parents have no high-school education. Parents at very low proficiency level in English. Parents happy with the school and the teachers. Parents not very involved in the children's education.	
Bilingualism	All three children speak Greek at home with the parents and English with their siblings. All three children go to Greek school and are fairly fluent in Greek. They all consider Heritage language school to be important.		
Ranking by teacher			
Grade 2	13/23	3/23	7/23
Grade 3	14/17	9/17	5/17[5]
Grade 4	28/28	8/28	5/12

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[5] 17 represents the number of children in grade 3 in a split 3/4 class

Ranking by the Research Officer in charge of the Assessment.[6]

	Ari	Nektaria	Mano
Math computation			
Nov. 1986	92	82	89
June 1987	91	82	92
Nov. 1987	99	96	98
Word problems			
Nov. 1986	16	18	12
June 1987	17	21	18
Nov. 1987	21	19	21
Oral reading			
Nov. 1986	2.2	4.2	4.8
June 1987	2.5	6.2	4.8
Nov. 1987	2.5	6.6	6.5
Silent Reading Comprehension: Recall			
Nov. 1986	5	18	16
June 1987	6	18	22
Nov. 1987	8	19	23
Silent Reading Comprehension: Inference			
Nov. 1986	7	11	14
June 1987	8	19	21
Nov. 1987	8	21	28

Academic abilities (English) as observed in the classroom by a Research Officer.

	Ari	Nektaria	Mano
Oral language	All three children have a very good command of spoken English.		
Written Language	Extremely poor	Excellent	Fairly good
Reading	Very poor	Very good	Very good
Math computations	Excellent	Fair	Fairly good
Problem-solving	All three children have some difficulties with word problems.		

---

[6] Ari was not assessed during the last assessment of June 1988, therefore this is not reported here.

There are many similarities between the children and some essential differences as well. These children were born in Canada in families which were already fairly well established, judging by the length of time of residence of all the parents; Ari's parents, however, had a more extended education than the parents of the other two children, are fairly fluent in English and conduct their own business, where they are in permanent contact with customers (although a major proportion of the customers are Greek-speaking).

The other two sets of parents are employed at "lower" jobs, where the linguistic demands are minimal, therefore their knowledge of English fossilized at a functional elementary level. They are not able to help their children themselves with English school, and have more trouble understanding the educational system that their children are part of.

As youngest siblings in the family, all three children have the advantage of more exposure to English than their older brothers and sisters had, also there was help readily available to them when necessary. In effect, all three children report on being helped by older siblings, also teachers notice sometimes homework where "older" help is evident.

As for the personal linguistic background of the three children, they all speak Greek at home with their parents, go to Greek school and acknowledge its significance for their heritage .

Allowing for differences in level according to personal abilities, likes and dislikes, we would expect Ari to have some linguistic advantage over the other two children; as we have seen, Ari, while doing well in some Math-related subjects and activities, has a very serious handicap in written language, with his reading and writing well below class level, and well below what would be acceptable from a child of his oral linguistic ability and general academic potential.

Let us recapitulate the facts observed so far:

- Ari comes from a more culturally and linguistically (English) enriched background, however he lags far behind in written aspects of Language Arts, as compared to Nektaria and Mano, whose home backgrounds are at a lower cultural and linguistic (English) level. We would have expected the contrary to happen.

- Ari's parents are on a higher rung of the socio-economic ladder than Nektaria's and Mano's parents. We would expect that this would be reflected in better academic performance by Ari than by the other two children. In this case, the facts prove this expectation wrong. Furthermore. Ari's parents are more involved in their son's education and much more aware of educational procedures and philosophies than Nektaria's and Mano's parents.

- For all three children, the presence of older siblings is beneficial; they are all doing better than their siblings. This fact could be generalized to the effect that in immigrant families, the younger children are advantaged in school. due to the previous exposure of their older siblings in English. From the experience of classroom observations, it appears that, although very common, this situation is not absolute: many "oldest" siblings succeed in school and do well without the input of an older brother or sister.

- All three children are fluently and actively bilingual. For all three, their spoken English and their comprehension are excellent. If we expect the bilingualism to interfere with their language in its other aspects -- reading, writing -- it surely didn't happen with Nektaria and Mano: both have been scored "average" to "high" by their teachers, the Research Officer in charge of Assessment, and the Research Officer conducting the research in the classroom. Ari has been scored well below grade level both in writing and reading by teachers and researchers, and has shown no progress in these disciplines through the 3 years of the research. This situation cannot be attributed to his bilingualism (as his parents imply), because bilingualism did not interfere with the academic performance of the other two children.
- In Math, Ari is doing better than the other two children at the computational level. This may also be facilitated by the fact that he is often helping his parents in the store, where his computational skills are required and practiced. All three children have difficulties with problem-solving -- word problems --, although Mano is showing progress in this area. For this particular skill, a thorough familiarity with the subtler aspects of the language is essential, in order to grasp the "message" of the word problem; it is possible that the Greek children, possibly most immigrant children, at this particular and still early time in their linguistic development, lack a real deep knowledge of English, knowledge available to native speakers of English.

Discussion

No doubt, some of the issues connected with Ari's case can be generalized to many other Greek children, and even to children from other ethnic communities. This study, however, will focus on Ari's case; all relevant arguments will be based on data collected on Ari through classroom observations, on the results of tests and assessments, on information acquired from report cards, on interviews with Ari and his classmates, on interviews with Ari's teachers and other teachers from his school, and on interviews with Ari's parents.

Although it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to present each issue as a detached entity, I will try to focus on one issue at a time, while acknowledging its overlap with other areas of interest in the case.

The issues are grouped around the two main focii in Ari's life: the school and the family, and eventually the communication -- or the lack of it -- between them. Issues of language and learning stem both from the school and home environment. The "school" issues cover a number of areas like gradeness, placement, repeating, special children, testing and reporting, and communication within the school. The "home" issues cover the culture and preconceptions brought by the parents to their child's education, their attitude towards school in general, and the child's school in particular. The bond between the two, perhaps one of the most vital elements in the success or failure of the children in school, remains the lifeline and ultimately the key to a productive cooperation between educators, parents and learners.

Gradeness, testing and retention.

Some of the questions one tends to ask in a problem case is whether the child was placed in the right classroom; what is the right classroom for a particular child, what kind of teacher is the right teacher for that child; how are the placement decisions made. Which children benefit from straight or split grades, whether being in the lower or the higher section of a split grade has any significance from the point of view of success in learning. What is the impact of "repeating" a grade on the development of a child. And finally what does it mean to be in a certain grade, or to be more specific, what makes a "grade" a "grade".

We have seen how the Greek community views some of these issues: split grades are frowned upon, retention is considered as a stigma on the child and his/her family. Let us turn to the teachers and see how they react to these issues.

> "The solution, which is too radical for anyone to do, is to de-grade the system, you just have kids entering and flowing through and leaving... What you do is you get away from standard text and use other materials. You have to have smaller classes and non-textbook material, and have kids entering and leaving at different times... But it's too radical and it can't be done, and as long as the system is going to accept thirty kids in a classroom, you are going to have to deal with gradeness, and sometimes retention..." (Teacher's interview, grade 6, June 1988)

I asked teachers to define "grade". From "a fairly steep hill" all the way to elaborate explanations about math and language curriculum, teachers tried to define what their philosophy of "gradeness" is. Listening to their responses, it became evident that they all felt that there were no distinct boundaries between grades, rather some kind of flow, with kids "flowing" at different speeds. While some were able to present specific tasks for specific levels:

> "...in grade 2, they are still trying to find their way in terms of sentences and how to put their thoughts down. Grade 3, they seem to have more of a grasp of what a story is and how it's not only for them, but for an audience..."

many of the teachers advocated keeping children with the same teacher for at least two years.

The school includes a "family grouping" -- Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten and grade 1 -- where most of of the children stay with the same teacher for 2 or 3 years. Some of the teachers keep classes for two years on a regular basis, starting from grade 5 and continuing through grade 6. There are visible advantages in doing this:

> "...the continuity and security are important.
>
> ...once having had a lot of ground rules and a framework set in grade five, I could allow a lot more individual and group activity and cooperative learning to go in next year, which I could do almost immediately.
>
> ...You don't waste September, and sometimes even October and November, in getting things established in terms of the routines and discipline or expectations, it's all there." (Teacher's interview, grade 5, 1987)

Comments from a teacher who gets a new class every year:

> "... I feel I would like another year with them. Because now, when you are getting to know them and they are getting to trust you, it's goodbye time.... I would like to have spent more time with them. It takes a long time to develop this in a child." (Teacher's interview, grade 1, 1987)

During our 3-year observation period, Ari had a new teacher each year. Although some information is passed from one classroom to another, it is completely informal and voluntary on the part of the teacher. Some of the teachers will read the information provided by the former classroom teacher, while others prefer to form their own impressions of the child, without input from another person; it may take a few weeks, or months, for a teacher to recognize special problems in a child, and to start the bureaucratic machinery which will provide the necessary specialized help needed by that particular child.

In grade 3, Ari was in a split grade 3/4 classroom, taught by an excellent and dedicated teacher who was teaching a split grade for the very first time. Had the child been in the higher section of a split grade, he would have gotten extra attention together with the lower section. Being in the lower section of a split grade, in a large class, is not the optimum medium for a child who needs special attention. The teacher comments:

> "If you group the kids, then it's OK, because my low kids are grouped together so there is time spent with them.I guess it is just time, you don't have as much time to spend with individual children.
>
> ...It's when you have a kid who's really low and just doesn't seem to fit anywhere, you have to individualize the program for him... They get lost, these children get lost; and sometimes if you have a bright kid as well, they'll get lost too, because you just can't deal with extremes in a class of... next year I will have 32, how can you deal with extremes in a class of 32? It's a big factory. I try to teach the above average; sometimes the low kids get frustrated." (Teacher's interview, grade 3, 1987)

The size of the classrooms is a leit-motif woven into all the discussions with teachers: there is no time for individualized attention. One obvious solution is to offer the child the possibility to participate in a program where he/she can get this special individualized attention, either on a one-to-one basis, or in very small groups.

The school has these programs, the Learning Centre and the Reading Clinic.

However, in order to be accepted, there are some necessary tests and evaluations:

> "At the beginning of the year, I give them a sort of general test, and the kids who do poorly on that test I give them an individual test with me, where I am asking the questions... just to see where the problem is... So if the kid still scores low with me, then I bring the student's name up to the local IPRC[7] meeting and
> I just say "I am really concerned about this kid... maybe we should have this kid tested..." it could be by reading clinician, or it could be by psychologist, depending what the problem is."

In order to participate in any of these special classes, the child has to be tested. In order to be tested, the school has to secure the parents' approval. Greek parents are suspicious of special tests, they also believe that being tested and eventually put in a special class is a rather shameful event for a child and his family. The grade 3 teacher didn't succeed in convincing Ari's parents to have the child tested. Considering the child's academic record, there is always the possibility that some specific problem could have been identified, and the alternative -- repeating the grade -- would have never been proposed.

Both testing and repeating were rejected by Ari's parents; the child entered grade 4. At the beginning of the year, there was the teachers' strike. After school was resumed, the grade 4 teacher started the action again to have the child tested; the child was finally slotted to start Reading Clinic in January. The fateful report card with the recommandation to repeat arrived, and the child was taken out of school.

Like all the teachers before her, the grade 4 teacher agonized over her recommendation to repeat. The grade 3 teacher never even put it in writing. It is not an easy decision to make; will the academic benefit outweigh the social stigma attached to repeaters, also to the loss of classmates from the same age-group? And, indeed, are the academic successes automatic and guaranteed?

I discussed this crucial issue with the teachers and got various and varied responses. One of the teachers had insisted on one of her children repeating grade one. This particular child, also from a Greek background, was one of the children that we studied; this fact gave us more access to the information around this event. The teacher convinced the parents of the benefit to the child of repeating at this early age, rather than having to repeat later on, also of the advantage of continuing with the same teacher for another year.

At the end of his second time around in grade 1, both mother and teacher seemed satisfied with the results. The mother, not very happy about it at first, found that another year with the same teacher was beneficial for the child: he progressed well academically, improved socially, and became more confident. The teacher considered that it was much easier to repeat in a lower grade than later on, and found the child's progress satisfactory.

In order to avoid having a child repeat, especially if the child is already older, or has a history of repeating, the school "transfers" some of the children to a higher grade, rather than "passing" them. Actually this is what happened to Ari on his way from grade 3 to grade 4. It seems that it is only a matter of semantics, to absolve a teacher of the responsibility of the decision, especially if the decision is not supported by the parents.

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[7] Identification, Placement and Review Committee. This committee, which deals both with "problem" children and with "gifted" children, includes the parents and teacher of the child, as well as the principal and/or vice-principal.

One of the teachers explains the rationale behind this policy:

> "There is a trade-off. Some kids, by the time you get them to grade level, they might be three or four years older. Well, socially, that's disastrous. A year, you can allow for; but if they get much older, it becomes socially such a negative experience that any kind of possible reinforcement or consolidation of skills would be lost by potential embarrassment, if not humiliation. So there is no point." (Teacher's interview, grade 5, 1987)

> "Retention does not make much sense, because those kids tend not to do very well... they are more likely to drop out... The research would suggest that kids who move on with their social group tend, in the long term, to do better than kids who are held back one year and then move on, and they tend to drop out." (Teacher's interview, grade 6, 1988)

Another teacher describes the anguish generated by having to make this kind of a decision:

> "...lots of studies... say "Keep the kid with their social [group]...". And it really just depends on how traditional the classroom program is... and how willing the teacher is to carry kids at a wide range... and that creates problems, the wider the spread, I'm sure, especially if there are only one or two children.
>
> Every June, my stomach is in knots, because "Should I or shouldn't I repeat", that just keeps me awake at nights.
>
> If I have a kid who I think is discouraged at being at the bottom of the class, who is showing that they are improving, and that I believe that if they weren't at the bottom of the class, they weren't always feeling down about themselves, they work so darn hard and they are still at the bottom of the class, I think that's deadly. So I think those kids when they repeat, improve.
>
> ...Kids that are going to be low no matter what, then why repeat them? Keep them with their social group.
>
> ...If I think it will make a big difference, I'll repeat them... But if mom insists they go on, usually they go on. Like Ari's mother said: "If you repeat him, I'll pull him out and put him in private school, or I'll put him in another school."

Ari happened to be part of a classroom whose teacher, concerned with her pupils' academic and personal growth, believed that retention is beneficial for children with potential. Had he had no potential, or had he had a teacher who didn't believe in retention, maybe the parents would have eventually taken time to solve his problems, in agreement with the school, in a different manner. What seems distressing, in this case, is the lack of a school-policy, or board-policy, that the parents would be familiar with, and that could help them make the right decision. The future academic development of a child being at stake, it shouldn't be a matter of opinion of different individuals along the continuum of the child's school life. Allowing for personal views and opinions, the school should present a front of common philosophy of education and educational policies that should be consistent as the child moves from grade to grade, and that could inspire confidence in the parents and involve them in decision-making.

On the one hand, the parents consider that they lose control over decisions regarding their children, on the other hand the teachers feel that the school gives in too much to the parents and has no power in making its own decisions. Maybe the parents don't trust the school because they don't understand how it really works and what it can do for their children. If situations like Ari's are to be avoided in the future, the lines of communication between school and parents should become a two-way road, with reciprocal understanding of the problems encountered by the teachers trying to cope to the best of their ability with the pressures inherent in their role as educators, and also of the problems of ethnic parents, anxious to give their children the best, but often limited in their efforts by a still unfamiliar language and culture.

Communication: teacher to teacher, school and home.

I feel thet Ari has been, to a certain degree, a victim of a failure in communication. A child, in the course of his progress through school, passes through a long line of "educational hands": the classroom teacher (past, present and future), ESL or special education class teachers (where necessary), possibly a psychologist or social worker (where necessary), French teacher, Heritage Language teacher, librarian, music teacher, swimming teacher; after school: parents, older siblings, private tutors (where necessary).

Who is the person in charge of the child's education, who is the person that makes the final decision about what is right or wrong for a particular child, the person who designs an educational plan best suited for an individual child? Is this person part of the "school" family or the "home" family? Or should there be a collaboration between the two main centers of learning in the child's life, the school and the home?

Ideally, both parents and teachers should agree on an educational course; that would involve close contact between school and home, with an on-going dialogue during the child's school life. The school should inform the parents of school policies, should keep the parents up-to-date with the child's progress and any special problems arising, should attempt to explain the educational system to immigrant parents and involve them in the day-to-day decisions regarding their child. Parents should be invited to participate in school activities, to observe classroom work, and should be encouraged to become directly involved in the learning process. On the other hand, parents should share with the school their feelings and wishes, and also make an effort to understand and participate in the system in which their children are receiving their formal education.

Ideally.

However, the schools are overburdened with responsibilities and bureaucratic red tape, teachers are restricted in the time that they have available to conduct an on-going dialogue with the parents, parents are suspicious of tendencies and facts not clearly presented, there is a barrier of language and culture that both teachers and parents need to work hard to break through.

Narrowing down to the school front, the communication issue is present also at all points of interaction between the various teachers involved in a child's education. I have listed a number of people that have daily or frequent contact with the child; a reasonable assumption would be that one of them would be primarily responsible for the child, preferably the classroom teacher, and that the other people would either report or at least discuss with the classroom teacher about their various input in the child's learning process.

During the three years of our observing him, Ari had three classroom teachers, a French teacher, a music teacher, a swimming teacher, he participated in library activities, was about to be enrolled in Reading Clinic; he went to a private Heritage Language school; at home, his brother helped him actively with English school, and his parents supervised his Greek school homework. What we are interested in are the communicative efforts most relevant for Ari: communication from grade to grade, and communication between school and Heritage Language classes, the other important factor in Ari's formal education. It is my belief that there was little communication between teachers from grade to grade and no communication whatsoever between schhol and Heritage language school.

The communication between school and home was not efficient, the report cards did not always reflect the exact nature of the problems encountered by Ari, and the parents and the school did not succeed in coordonating their respective beliefs and apprehensions. According to the parents, the school did not respond to their enquiries; according to the teachers, the parents did not engage in a meaningful discussion.

Although each one of the issues enumerated in the previous paragraphs deserves individual attention, it is rather difficult to discuss them in isolation; each issue involves various aspects of communication going in different directions.

Let us start with the report cards. Report cards are primarily aimed at parents, however they also constitute a strong link between grades, and subsequently between teachers of consecutive grades. The information conveyed by them gives the parents a measure of the child's achievement in class, of his/her progress, and at the same time signals potential problems arising throughout the year. In the best scenario, it also prepares the next teacher and makes him or her aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the child.

As a communication instrument, the report card has to be clear and explicit, and the criteria used for evaluation need to be consistent. The consistency across grades requires teachers to be aware of previous report cards. If progress has occurred from grade to grade, this should be reflected in the report card; if not, an explanation has to be presented in terms of grades, as well as in the remarks included in the report.

I will return for a moment to Ari's report cards discussed in earlier sections. The grade 1 report card indicates as approximate grade levels: Reading "2" and Mathematics "2", an excellent prognosis for a grade 1 student. The grade 2 report card, while giving as approximate grade levels "-2" (minus 2) for reading and "2" for Mathematics, also adds "Ari has made steady progress in grade 2".

What is the message that the parents get from such a treatment of reporting? Their son, at a grade 2 level in grade 1, went down to a minus 2 grade level in grade 2, but "has made steady progress". Regardless of whether the criticism should be aimed at the grade 1 or the grade 2 teacher, the fact is that there is apparent inconsistency in these successive reports. While allowing for individual approaches to reporting, also taking into consideration the time limitations and the demands made on teachers, the school administration should be ultimately responsible for coordinating the information provided by the teachers to the parents in such a way that the parents can build a trust in the school system. Furthermore, we are looking at children of immigrant parents, who look at the school through a maze of conflicting ideas caused by their own background culture and educational experience, and that have access to the given information using either a partial knowledge of the language or the services of an interpreter, be it an official school interpreter or a family member.

Let us return to the teacher-to-teacher communication issue. While it is easy to lay part of the blame on the teacher, we should be reminded again of the time limitations on the teacher. Anyone spending some time in a classroom can not help being aware of the tremendous effort invested by the teachers in their work: the level of the children in the classroom is extended beyond what would constitute a normal homogenous "grade"; there are interruptions throughout the day; children are withdrawn from the classroom for any number of reasons, obliging the teachers to perform acrobatic feats of scheduling. Mostly, there is no official time allowance for communication between teachers. Maybe the school administration should attempt to include into the normal school routine a certain amount of time earmarked for sharing information and planning working strategies for teachers working with the same children. The beginning of each school year could also include conferences between consecutive teachers, conferences that would facilitate planning for optimum learning conditions for each child during the coming year.

To give credit to the teachers, in spite of time shortages, there is some communication taking place, however this is left to chance and to personal good will. A teacher comments:

> "... The teachers involved in all these programs don't communicate. They absolutely don't. If you communicate, it's a snatched few minutes on the stairs, or it's here, or it's there.
>
> It's a major weakness of this school... There is no communication between teachers, or there is limited communication between teachers; it's not on a regular basis, it's certainly not on a "sit down, focus on the child" basis... We don't plan together, we don't work as a grade unit particularly.
>
> ...We moved away from something that we might do inter-class, inter-division... But that, to specific children, they are really paying the price badly for that, and we have to do something about it. Hopefully, with prep time next year... some of that prep time will be in actual fact consultation time between teachers. Because, not only do we not communicate about what we are doing, so that I know what the ESL teacher does, or what the Language Learning Cantre teacher does, but our styles, our philosophies, are diametrically opposed to each other.

> ... There is nothing built in the system that allows for communication between teachers, and there is nothing built into the system that allows for the meshing of methodology." (Interview with Family Grouping teacher, 1988)

> Another teacher proposes a solution to the problem:

> "We should be having monthly meetings... like all the teachers involved with these kids "OK, what are you doing in terms of curriculum? What are you doing in terms of language?" I might want to say to the Learning Centre teacher "This kid is really having a lot of problems in multiplication; can you zero in on multiplication?
>
> I do that anyway; what I'll do, I'll send their math books, if it's math, and I'll write "Please do this".
>
> ... I have never been in an ESL class here; I don't know what's going on." (Teacher's interview, grade 3, 1987)

Most of the teachers praised their communication with the librarian. One of the secrets of this succes story is the fact that the librarian is one of the few continuous elements in the children's school life; she works with them year after year, as they move through the grades, and quite often is capable of giving feedback and even advice to the classroom teacher. Another reason this collaboration works is that the librarian sets time aside to keep appointments with individual teachers in order to discuss their common goals in teaching a particular class.

Asked about communication with the administration, the principal and vice-principal, one of the teachers mentioned as sole occasions the times when she has to "push and fight" to get one of her children in a special class -- Reading Clinic or Learning Centre. Another teacher leaves a note on what he wants to get done in the vice-principal's box, and it gets done. According to one of the teachers, getting to a psychologist "is impossible".

There are children who, no matter what, will do well in school. But then, there are children who need all the help that they can get in order to succeed. The school can offer that help; but it offers it in a conglomerate of disparate patterns, each one with its own merits, but very few with common lines between them. If the school expects these children to benefit from the help offered and to do well in school and eventually in life, it will have to pull the pieces together and form one intelligible and coherent pattern. It is the school's duty to achieve the coherence and to succeed in enlisting the parents in its efforts, by making them knowledgeable partners in the child's education.

Then, back to the parents. Understandably, if the teachers have problems figuring out what the children are doing in other classes, so have the parents. The school has an open door policy, whereby parents can drop in to talk to the teacher, in addition to regularly scheduled interviews. In fact, some of the parents do just that, either they come to chat with the teacher, or spend time in the classroom, observing what their child is learning. The parents that mostly benefit from this possibility are the Anglophile ones. The parents from various ethnic backgrounds have a different view of the relationship with the school and teacher, and do not readily drop in in the classroom.

Interviews are often conducted through the intermediary of an interpreter; while this adds to the accuracy of the information, it takes away from the spontaneity of the dialogue. As discussed earlier, many of the Greek parents do not trust the school and do not understand or agree with the Canadian educational system. Although huge progress has been made in the direction of collaboration between school and home, sometimes things do not work out as expected.

In the case of Ari, the parents were able to communicate without an interpreter: their English was adequate for the purpose. Like all the other parents, they received report cards and had interviews. However, something got misinterpreted or misunderstood; it is not clear whether the school missed on Ari's problem, by augmenting a possible -- so far untested -- learning problem into a proposal for retention both in grade 3, and later in grade 4, or whether the parents did not get sufficient information and encouragement to discuss the problem. According to the parents, the principal and the social worker did not return their calls. The teacher felt frustrated because she was not included in the parents' decision and could not present her side of the argument. She had to include in the Christmas report card that she considered proposing that Ari repeat grade 4; this happened at the same time that Ari was finally accepted into the Reading Clinic. It is possible that a potential problem would have been isolated and the child would have received help. Or possibly, there was no learning disability, but a lag in the child's progress in Language Arts, a lag that would have improved with the additional attention bestowed by the one-to-one teaching environment of the Reading Clinic, in which case, the retention possibility would have been dropped; the child was fairly good in topics other than language.

It is more than probable that the parents were not aware that the teacher's inclusion of the retention possibility was a matter of protocol: she was obliged to warn the parents at mid-year if there was a possibility of having to retain the child in the same grade. The parents might have taken this as a fait-accompli, and with incomplete information, and possibly no access to the school administration to further discuss the situation, they took the decision all by themselves and withdrew the child from the school.

No doubt a change is sometimes beneficial. There is a strong possibility that the parents trust the new school more than the previous one, if only because it was their choice and they had to justify it. However, the problem -- whether a learning disability or a learning lag -- existed. By changing schools, and consequently teachers, the process of recognizing and identifying the learning problem is lengthened, and the person standing to lose most is again the child.

One additional question comes to mind. If a non-ethnic child had been in Ari's place, would the situation have been handled differently? Would the child have fared better, or the same? Communication with the parents would have been smoother, with less misunderstandings. If there really was a problem, the chances are that it would have been detected earlier: there is always the possibility that Ari's "problem" was not recognized because teachers identified it with a language learning problem attributed to his speaking Greek at home. We know that this is not the case, because the examples abound where Greek-speaking children excel in Language Arts; we have just met Nektaria whose parents can hardly communicate in English and who is a top student, especially in Language related disciplines.

Would responsibility be laid on the school's doorsteps for not forcing the parents into facing the fact that the child needed help? Or for not labelling the "problem" in such a way that the parents would not be frightenend and driven to "save" the child from the school? Or for not identifying the problem earlier? Or for not being there for the parents when they tried to discuss about their child?

Or should the parents be blamed for not wanting to face the fact that the child needed extra help? Or for being terrified at the prospect of their son having to repeat a grade, when an older son went through the same experience a few years earlier? Or for not trusting the teacher and the school? Or for allowing Ari not to apply himself more to reading, because he is a boy, and the Greek culture indulges boys? Or for being suspicious of the whole Canadian educational system and agreeing for their son to receive instruction in English and Math from the Greek teacher in the Heritage Language class?

Ethnicity, culture, language and learning.

At this point, it is time to face one of the most important issues in this discussion: the uneasy meeting of two cultures, of two different ideological backgrounds, which have not yet come to terms with each other. The parents have the final authority over the child, however the child already lives in a new world, of which his school is an important part. If the child chooses to side eventually with the "new world", the gap between him/her and the parents' "world" is going to widen, and maybe there will be estrangement from a rich ethnic heritage. If the child chooses to reject the "new world", he/she will be marginalized by a society of which he/she will never feel him/herself a full member. Let us not forget, though, that the parents came to this country in order to offer their children a better chance to the "good" life, and that includes first and foremost easy and free access to a good educational system. The confrontation, thus, becomes more acute, because the school tries to offer the children this education that the parents wanted for them; the parents realize its advantages while trying to cling to that which is familiar to them, that they can understand and relate to.

What is the role of the school in this situation? There are thousands of children like Ari all over Metro Toronto, all over Canada. Is the school system equipped to handle the situation, are the teachers sensitive to the special needs of new Canadians and trained to cope with them?

In a conversation with one of the administrators of Johnson School, the problem of the ethnicity of the school population was summarily dismissed with the comment that the school is not ethnic because the majority of the children in the school were born in Canada (personal communication). It is true that most of the children were born in Canada -- so was Ari and all the other children from our Greek sample --, this however doesn't make them less ethnic than if they had been born in Greece: the formative years have been spent with the family which still fully identifies itself with the Greek culture and the home language has been almost exclusively Greek. For all purposes, these children are native speakers of Greek and English is their second language.

> "It is very hard to counteract the parents' influence. They do have the strongest influence, whether they realize it or not, until the kids get into the peers..." (Teacher's interview, grade 4, 1988)

Children at this age identify with the home culture; asked about their nationality, most of the children from Greek families identified themselves as "Greek", usually justifying their choice with the fact that their parents were Greek. Some of the children gave as their nationality "Greek -Canadian" or "Canadian-Greek". Only one boy declared himself "Canadian", because he was born in Canada, but quickly added "I would do better in school if I would speak English". None of the children felt that their being Greek affected their membership in the school and the classroom. One of the older boys declared himself "Canadian in class and Greek at home", and acknowledged that his parents didn't feel Canadian and had a hard time adjusting to life in Canada.

Through my observations in the classrooms, discussions with teachers, children and parents, I have been able to perceive areas of difference in cultural and educational philosophies, areas of discord or misunderstanding, also to feel where there is a need, and also the possibility for contact between all the parties involved and interested in our children's education. Some of the issues in question are:

- the Heritage Language classes;
- teachers' education in the various cultures of their schools;
- a better understanding of the linguistic abilities and needs of speakers of English as a second language, geared to the characteristics of each ethnic group;
- parents' involvement in classroom and school activities, in order to promote an open dialogue and mutual trust.

The issue of Heritage Language classes has been touched upon several times in my discussion in connection with different aspects of Ari's school and home activities. During our research, all the Greek children in the sample were enrolled in Greek school.[8] The importance of the childrens' participation in these classes, both from their point of view and from their parents', was discussed earlier. The value of maintaining and reinforcing the ties with one's linguistic and cultural background, of developing a feeling of identity both with the chosen and with the ancestral heritage, is beyond discussion; every effort should be invested in providing quality instruction and guidance in multicultural education.

I wanted to find out how the classroom teachers perceived the mandate of Heritage Language classes and to what degree they saw this aspect of the children's education as partnering their own input in the academic development of the children.

Answers reflected both their belief in the importance of these classes and their concern about the quality of education they offer to the children:

> "...I agree absolutely that the kids need to be aware of their Heritage and need to be proud of it, certainly not embarrassed by it."
>
> "...People that teach (Greek) language, I don't think they are teachers..."
>
> "...I asked (the principal of the school) about it and he said that some of it is funded by the Greek Government... and it is basically for people that think they might return to Greece, so that the kid will fit into the Greek system when they return; that's the whole concept behind it." (Teachers' interviews, 1987, 1988)

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[8] One of the older girls stopped in the middle of grade 6.

Another on-going concern voiced by teachers was the number of hours spent by children in Heritage Language classes. While the average time per week is six to seven hours, some of the children spend as much as 11 hours a week in Greek classes. The problems are two-fold: on the one hand, there is the element of fatigue, some of these children being practically babies that sit in classrooms from 8:45 AM[9] till 7:00 PM; on the other hand, due to lack of coordination between the two educational systems -- the mainstream school and the Greek school -- young children are exposed to two different methodologies on a daily basis.

A child like Ari, who might have a learning problem, will surely pay dearly in his academic performance, just by trying to adapt on a daily basis to the demands of two entirely different pedagogic approaches. In his case, the situation was exacerbated by the fact that, beside Greek, both English and Math were taught in Greek school. Even an outstanding student would have trouble adapting his thinking strategies in order to respond to two completely different methodologies; it is no wonder that Ari was overwhelmed not by the system, but by the "systems".

I asked the children how they felt about Greek school. Most of the children have a deep sense of the importance of preserving their ethnicity, and their answers reflected that:

> "I have to know about my history, and I also have to know where I come from, and I also have to know how to read in Greek."
>
> "Greek is a very unique language, it will help with other languages."
>
> "To find a job, it's better with two languages."

I also wanted to find out how children evaluated the actual teaching that takes place in Heritage Language classes. The answers were highly critical of the methodology, and sometimes the content, of the teaching. The children wanted to learn Greek, they wanted to take part in these classes and participate in their ethnicity, however, after years of being exposed to an educational system in which they were partners in their own education, they were able to articulate their criticism and doubts about Greek school. Here are some of their comments:

> "We read a paragraph each, wait for the whole class to read their paragraph... two sentences to learn for next class."
>
> "Sometimes my teacher is not that nice; her idea of fun is pulling out people's hair."
>
> "English (class) is different, you have many choices. In Greek, you don't have many choices, yes or no."

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[9] Actually, some of the children who are enrolled in daycare might start their school day as early as 7:30 AM.

> "We have 2-3 lines we have to learn off by heart and my teacher tells us and we write it down. We have a book, it gives us about 1-2 pages stories, we have to copy it in our books. Sometimes it's fun, sometimes it's boring."

> "We have to sit at a table... we don't move around the class, we just sit down."

> "I don't do anything... When we get in there, she tells us to read a story and that's it, and then I just have to read a paragraph, then I just sit at the desk and do nothing for the rest of the time. I just waste my time doing nothing."

I also got some information on misconceptions about Greek school:

> "My mom told me that your marks (in Greek) go to your English. If you get low on English and you get high in Greek school, the Greek school marks go to your English and your English marks go higher."

We have seen before that communication was one of the issues teachers felt very strongly about. This time, the issue of communication emerges again in a new context: communication between two educational systems competing for the same children. Our research did not include the Heritage Language classes; therefore I regret that I cannot include the Heritage Language teachers' view on the possibility of communicating with their students' classroom teachers. I have, however, the comments of Johnson School's teachers and administration on the contact between the two systems.

According to the principal, three of the nine Heritage Language teachers teaching at Johnson[10] have Ministry Certification, while the other six are certified from Greece. In answer to our "communication" question, he stated that he meets with the lead teacher that runs the program twice a week, and includes the rest of the Heritage Language teachers in about three staff meetings.

Sharing this information with one of the teachers elicited an unexpected response:

> "No way, absolutely under no circumstances... In fact, if anything, the communication between our Heritage Language teachers and the day teachers is hostile, because our rooms are used... the classrooms are used; things go missing, things are broken. The children are not happy going to the classes in many cases, because they are missing other kinds of things." (Family Grouping teacher, June 1988)

Another teacher descibes his contact with the Heritage Language teacher as minimal; his classroom is used in the afternoons by Greek school. He will stay until the Heritage Language teacher arrives, to make sure that no one enters the classroom between the two periods; there have been incidents of things stolen, desks damaged. Otherwise there is no professional contact:

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[10] From our sample of 12 Greek children, eight attend Board-sponsored classes and the rest learn in private Greek schools.

> "There is none (contact); I have no idea, I haven't even seen the copy of a report, or anything, of any of the kids who go to Greek school."
> (Teacher's interview, grade 5, 1987)

When there is some kind of communication, it turns into competition for priority in decision-making:

> "I can think of one case a year ago, where the heritage instructor, I presume to make himself look good, in effect gave a very inaccurate and I think dishonest evaluation of a kid. I told the mother where the kid was at in terms of English, and should really not go on into senior school. And the same kid, in grade one, should have been held back, because the skills weren't there, the poor kid was just dragging his butt along at the bottom of the class every year, but every year the mother had a temper tantrum... and screamed at the school, and the school backed down; and I wasn't prepared to..
>
> And the Greek Heritage instructor came in and said he was top of the class and terrific and wonderful, and "I can raise him from this level to this level by the end of the summer. And so, the kid lost the summer, had homework every day in July, every day in August, came into the school the week before school opened, did some tests, got up to grade level, went into senior school, and then when I got the report back, he had straight Ds, he's below grade level right across the board in every single subject. So he's right back to where he was in grade 1 and grade 6."
> (Teacher's interview, grade 5, 1987)

We have seen no attempt on the part of the Greek teachers in contacting the daytime teachers; similarly, we have seen no attempt by the daytime teachers to open lines of communication with the Greek teachers, although most daytime teachers interviewed appeared to agree that they should be sharing information about the children and ideas about teaching philosophies and curriculum planning with the Greek teachers.

I suggested earlier that teachers need time slots built into their schedule which would allow them to get in touch with the other teachers involved in their students' education. Professional encounters with the Heritage Language teachers should also be included in the school staff's schedule, either on a regular basis, or as part of Professional Development days, workshops, or staff meetings. Considering the heavy daily load of the classroom teacher, the responsibility for implementing and coordinating this important aspect of the children's educational development should be assumed either by the school administration or the Boards of Education.

And this leads us into the next issue of this section, the education, or rather familiarization of the teachers with their students' cultural backgrounds, as well as with their various linguistic abilities and needs. Most of our schools attract students from various ethnicities; some of the schools seem to "specialize" in a limited number of dominant ethnic backgrounds, depending on the current make-up of the neighbourhood. Rather than consider that a handicap -- having to provide ESL classes and other specialized instruction -- schools could look upon this as a wonderful opportunity both for the staff and the children: the teachers could familiarize themselves with a variety of cultures and draw upon them to enrich their pedagogic repertoire; children can share in each other's cultures, learn about different countries, customs, languages, etc.

One of the teachers proposes a solution already adopted by some of the other schools in Metro:

> "You have to work on that as a school, as a unit, or at least as a division... And that kind of leadership needs to come from your administration. That's why we have two administrators in the school, one of them is to provide that kind of curriculum leadership. If you look at the schools that are the most successful in dealing with their variety of cultures and celebrating the individual cultures, and learning about each other's cultures, they come in ... schools where there is release time for teachers and there is an extra person, a lead project teacher...
>
> Their mandate is to help the children by educating the teachers, by providing preparation time, providing support services for the teachers, so they have some breathing space to learn about other cultures, and to help their children then begin to celebrate their individual cultures. And it's been highly successful, because what they found happens... is that the children who... feel good about their cultures in a lot of ways, then do better in school." (Family Grouping teacher, 1988)

There is a thin line between "celebrating a culture" and isolating ethnic groups on the basis of their nationality. Some of the teachers feel that Heritage language classes tend to separate children from their peers on the basis of ethnicity, by giving them a differential kind of instruction and keeping them away from other activities. Also, as a result, the children from various ethnic groups have no contact with each other's heritage and a wonderful learning and sharing opportunity is being lost.

One of the teachers comments:

> "Philosophically, I certainly see absolutely nothing wrong with having kids aware of their heritage and their background... I guess sometimes I get a little bit concerned about getting kids separated on the basis of their race, to be taken to other rooms to be taught by people who are hired on the basis of their race.
>
> ... If we are going to be multicultural, , then we must understand each other's cultural backgrounds. But if you take kids out of a classroom to deal with their own particular culture, there is no sharing, and then it's not multicultural... It's isolated.
>
> ... If we are going to be multicultural, we need to develop some kind of understanding in this generation... I don't know how one deals with that, but it seems to me that I would rather have the instructors in the room doing a Greek unit, let's say, for four weeks in Environmental Studies, you can do 30, 60 minutes, whatever, a day...

> ...Do a unit on Greece, then you do a unit on another group, Chinese for example, Vietnamese, whatever. And that way, you also have the Anglo-Saxon kids appreciating the other cultures.
>
> ...Maybe in the primary division you would have that more multicultural approach, and only when the kids are older, maybe grade 5 or 6, or maybe not even till senior school, then... do the withdrawing from the room, because they would be used to rotary systems by then anyway; and they would go to their class to learn about their own specific heritage." (Teacher's interview, grade 5, 1987)

A successful attempt at sharing cultures is taking shape in the school library, where a multilingual collection, funded by the Board of Education, offers the children a chance to explore their own cultural and linguistic heritage, and also to get acquainted with that of their classmates and friends.

Although the acculturation of the teachers is an issue of primary importance, there are other aspects of the children's ethnicity which have not received enough attention so far: their linguistic competence as proficient speakers of English as a second language and their learning strategies.

When a child comes to the school with an insufficient knowledge of English, the education mechanisms enter in action, and under optimal conditions the child receives help from ESL classes, or from Reading Clinic or Learning Centre. There is a point, though, where the teachers recognize the child's competence in the language -- acquired either with specialized academic help, or simply through the normal processes of language acquisiton: at that point, additional academic support, whether it would be helpful or not, is deemed unnecessary. Around grade 5, and often earlier, most of the children born in Canada of Greek parents are considered fully proficient in oral English. Some of them, like Ari, exhibit serious problems with language when there is contact with text, either in reading or writing, usually both; their oral language, however, is accepted as fully adequate.

Report cards of the older kids, as well as SOLOM evaluations, reflect the teachers' belief in these children's English oral proficiency. In conversations as well as interviews, the comments lean towards assessing children as fully competent linguistically:

> "...Language is such a strong suit for him in school... He has a subtle sense of language... I use my humour a lot in class... he is very aware of it."
>
> "She certainly communicates very effectively in English... she has some errors which are typical of a grade 6 kid... and even those are relatively few and far between, because if I mention some of them, she is a conscientious enough student, that she'll try to remember."
>
> "Her oral English is quite good, no trace of broken English."
>
> "His oral language is fine... within a mainstream grade 6 classroom, he is in the middle of the mainstream orally."

> "His oral language is very good... his English was good, not the least bit broken."
> (From various teachers' interviews, 1987, 1988)

In spite of these glowing qualifications, there is concern and doubt as well; a grade 5 teacher discusses one of his ethnic students:

> "...Because of language disability, or lack of facility, she will not really hit her stride probably until maybe grade 8 or so, and then she'll be just dynamite, and she'll be dynamite in high school."

However, one year later -- in grade 6 --, the same teacher, discussing the same child, states that her vocabulary is at grade 8 level, and that there is nothing to indicate a language problem in her English, either oral or written.

A grade 4 teacher shared with us his observations on the way Greek children use English: he believes that their English is adequate only on the surface, but that they miss deeper meanings or shades of the lexicon. For most of the words, they will be familiar only with one meaning and miss on other possible meanings; they appear to be fully competent, because they are able to extract meaning from context. Their basic vocabulary, examined in isolation and out of context, would most probably score lower than that of English "home" speakers.

The teacher voiced his apprehension that these children are actually deprived linguistically due to lack of exposure to the language, as compared to children from homes where English is spoken, and that this linguistic lag is not detected and addressed, because the children "manage" to cover it using various communicative strategies. In higher grades, however, when a thorough knowledge of the language becomes imperative, they might find themselves in a position of inferiority at a time when it will be probably too late to remedy the situation. (personal communication)

An in-depth study of the linguistic competence of children from different ethnic backgrounds with the explicit purpose of establishing which areas of linguistic development -- phonologic, syntactic and/or semantic -- do not attain their full potential in these children, and of identifying specific patterns for various ethnic groups, could greatly benefit the teaching community; educators would be able to effectively help these children gain better command of the language and become competent literate members of the society.

Identifying linguistic issues according to ethnic groups will necessary bring into focus the nature of the first languages these children come to school with, with their own special characteristics and traits. Associations between the children's first language and the way English is learned should be taken into consideration and monitored throughout the child's progress through the school system.

Although this was never an overt issue, teachers have observed and commented on learning activities and habits specific to ethnic groups, also on specialized problematic or successful learning areas:

- Greek boys have poor work habits, Greek girls work hard and steadily;
- in French, Greek students are more verbal than Chinese ones;
- Chinese children seem to have problems with verb tenses;

- Chinese kids work well;
- Greek boys are good in computations;
- Chinese kids are more tuned in to academics and are more persistent;
- Greek kids seem to have an advantage in written language in French;
- Chinese kids have spelling problems in French and they appear to make the same kinds of mistakes.

These remarks were incidental and not backed by any systematic research, therefore of no pedagogic or scientific value. However, I believe that an organized study of language and learning factors geared specifically to the interaction of language patterns of first language and English could yield important information for the planning of the curriculum in the schools where ethnicity can be considered a crucial factor.

This kind of information can be eventually extended to developing learning strategies tailor-made to fit the special abilities and needs of any given linguistic community. To the extent that children from different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds use different learning strategies, this can be attributed partly to their linguistic inheritance, but also to the culture and expectations of their parents.

Teachers find that Greek parents mistrust them, the school and the educational system. By no means passive, they fight for what they think is right for their children, complementing the missing elements with Greek school and home input. They expect more from their boys than their girls. Because of the language barrier, also because of the large gap in cultural identity and expectations, the communication between the educational community and the home community is careful and tense; thus, both parents and teachers miss on the opportunity to discuss and share their respective philosophies and beliefs.

The children are the beneficiaries as well as the victims of this dual environment: beneficiaries, because they end up with two languages and a large cultural capital; victims, because often neither of their two languages develops to full potential, because their learning strategies have to adapt constantly to the source that provides the instruction at any given time, be it the school, the Heritage Language school or the home.

Is there a solution? A learning environment that would take into account the linguistic background as well as the educational and cultural input of these children; a system that would allow teachers the time to develop specific pedagogic skills according to the present population of the school, and to obtain the necessary time to work out learning strategies and long-term planning with the parents of the children entrusted to them. A hypothetical situation, of course, and probably impossible under present circumstances; however, in a country where immigration is active and where children from around the world enter our educational system on a daily basis, small inroads can and should be made, in order to give a better chance to all children, regardless of their ethnic and linguistic background, to attain their full potential, according to their personal abilities and interests.

EPILOGUE

This case study showcased a community, a school, several children, their classrooms, their teachers, and their families. Due to the limited number of children observed through our study, any firm conclusions would be entirely out of place; however, individual cases raise questions about issues of potential importance for a large number of children from any type of ethnic or socio-cultural background.

The dichotomy of preserving one's ethnicity and language while integrating in the host culture has been intensively discussed in the literature. This case study, while not claiming to offer solutions, aims at highlighting some aspects of this dichotomy; it also aims at serving as witness to the efforts of the community and the school in their quest to guide the children through their progress in acculturating themselves both in the Canadian and Greek environments.

The home language and the school language are both crucial elements in the harmonious development of children from various ethno-linguistic backgrounds; the interaction between the learners' languages and the learning opportunities within the school system emerges as a factor to be considered by the educational administrators.

The quality of leanguage learning is an issue of particular importance for the teaching community. As we have seen, some of the children from different ethno-linguistic backgrounds have no apparent difficulty in acquiring a thorough knowledge of English; however, a number of children attempt, through various strategies, to cover up their linguistic lacunae, especially in the areas of encoding and decoding written text. The present and future academic success of these particular children should be an item of major importance on the teachers' agenda.

While striving to preserve the individuality and personal approach of each teacher, it would be beneficial for the learners would there be more of a consensus on the definition and understanding of the process of "teaching" and "learning" reading and writing, through common agreed upon education policies involving the Boards of Education, the school administrators, the teachers, and the parents.

Most teachers are aware of problematic areas in the instruction of some of their students. There should be opportunities for special attention accorded to these learners' needs, be it in time or knowledge: if a child is not successful in certain areas of learning, the reasons should be sought in order to provide help before the problems accumulate and aggravate. Sometimes, motivation and interest can be sufficient to help a child conquer learning difficulties; in other cases, specialized professional help should be readily available and within the immediate reach of the classroom teacher.

The teachers I have worked with and whose classrooms I have observed showed obvious concern for the academic progress of the children in their classrooms, and quite often for their progress beyond the time and space boundaries of the classroom. There are many "Ari"s in the Canadian schools; but there are also many "Helen"s and "Samantha"s, many "Nektaria"s and "Mano"s, children who are successful academically, and are looking forward to achieving their goals in life, as well as to benefitting from both cultures that shape their growth and development.

July 1988 - April 1989

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APPENDIX 1

CHILDREN'S STORIES

Samantha:
Grade 5 - THE PRINCESS DISAPPEARS
Grade 6 - WHO KILLED MACKENZIE?

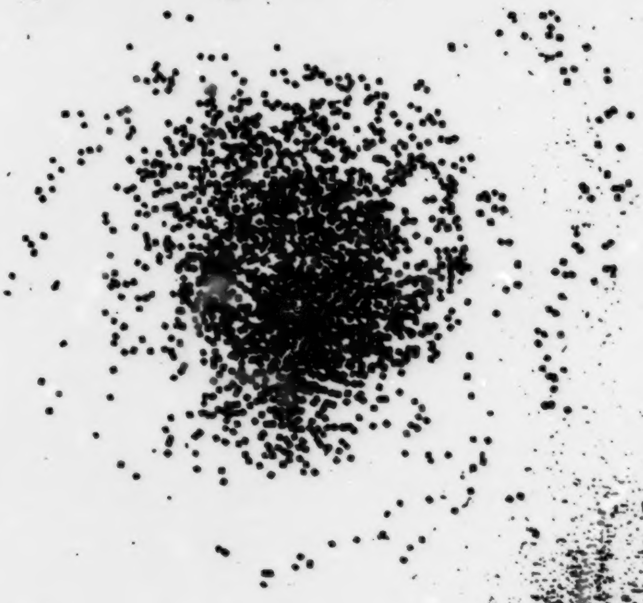
Helen:
Grade 5 - TROPICAL ROCKY LAND
Grade 6 - KIDNAPPING

Ari:
Grade 3 - CENTER ICE
Grade 4 - OLYMPIC GAMES IN CALGARY

Nektaria:
Grade 3 - THE MAGIC COFFIN
Grade 4 - MY GRANDMOTHER'S AWFUL MEDICINE

Mano:
Grade 3 - WOLFERS AWOOOOO!
Grade 4 - FLOWERS and IN THE FUTURE I WANT TO BE

The Princess Disappears



By: Samantha
(gr. 5)

Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess named Jane. Jane lived in a beautiful land called wonderland. She was lonely and wanted to get married. One day she told her father how she felt.

He said..."Well my princess are you sure you feel this way?"

"Oh yes father I have been lonly ever since mother died I mean passed away."

"Well something will have to be done."

"But what father?"

"Ummmh I have got it!"

"What father tell me."

"Well we will have a grand ball and invite all the princes in our wonderful world and you will dance with every one and then decide which one you want to marry!"

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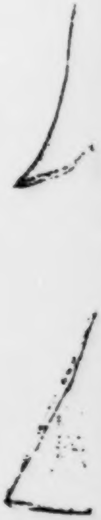
"O.K.!



"Father that is a great idea. Oh you are the best father a girl could ever have."

"I know!"

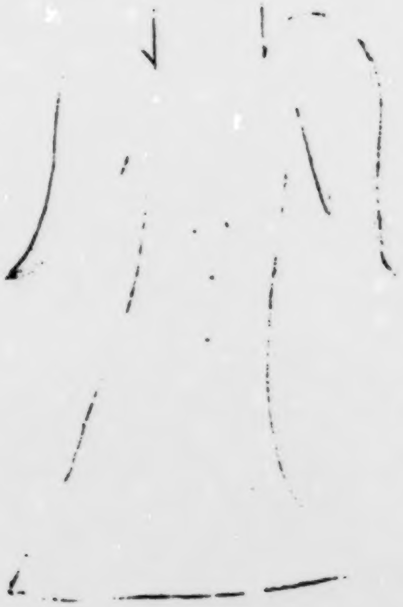
"But when will it take place?"

"How about this Saturday?"

"Thats perfect!"

"Now lets go buy you most beautiful dress in all of Wonderland."

"O.K.!"



When it was Saturday Jane danced with every prince and decided to choose a handsome prince named Cory. Jane and Corey went on there honeymoon to Vence. When they came back to the palace from there honeymoon they were bushed so they both went to sleep.

Jane s

and woke up

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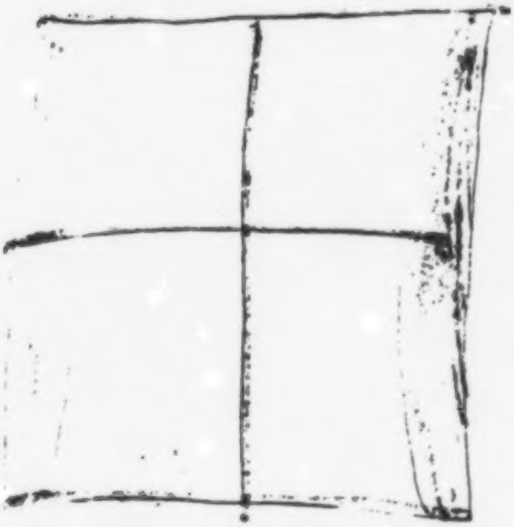
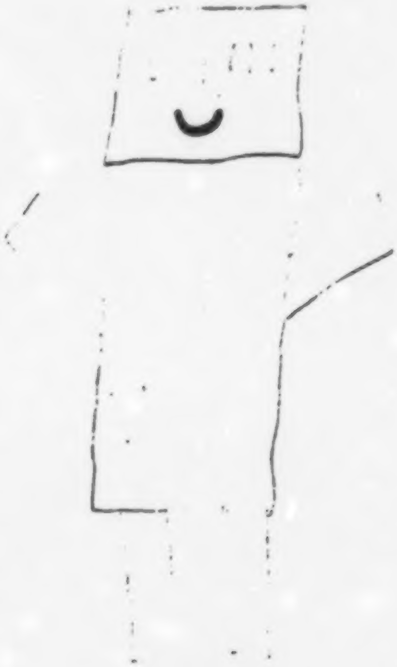
Jane saw a shadow in her bedroom window. and woke up Carey and he said it was only her imagination. Jane felt better and fell right asleep. In the morning Jane was not in bed; Carey must have thought she was downstairs in the kitchen but she wasn't.



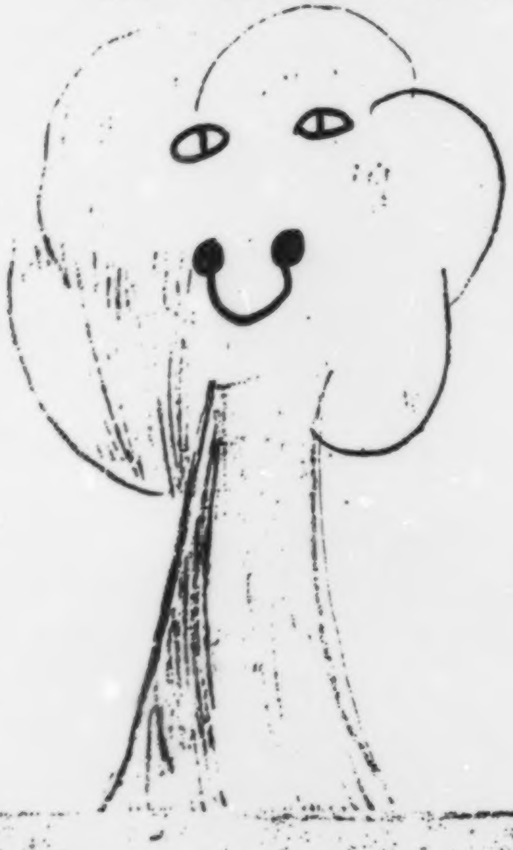
Corey called the robot guards and told them to look all over the palace but there was no such luck. so Corey decided to take his car and go look for Jane himself he went to town and asked people if they saw her but know one did so Corey went to the woods and said.....



"Where could she be?" then a tree said he saw her go that with an ugly devil. so Corey went and found Jane but she was under a sleeping spell. Then the devil came up from under ground and told Corey to give the Devil the palace and to take the kings thrown.

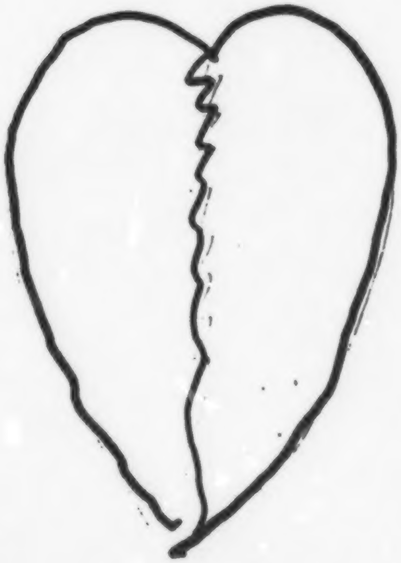
Corey said..."Never."

"Don't talk like that to your next king."



Corey had a gun with him for protection. The Devil said to Corey "Give me the palace or never see your wife again."

The Devil went to get Jane but Corey shot him 5 time in the heart wright in the nick of time. And Jane whoke up frome her sleeping spell and



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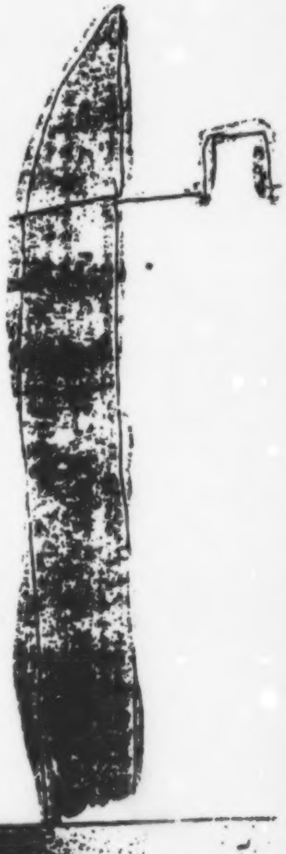

protection.
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Corey picked her up and Jane said what happened just forget this ever happend. And they set back to the palace and they lived Wonderly ever after.

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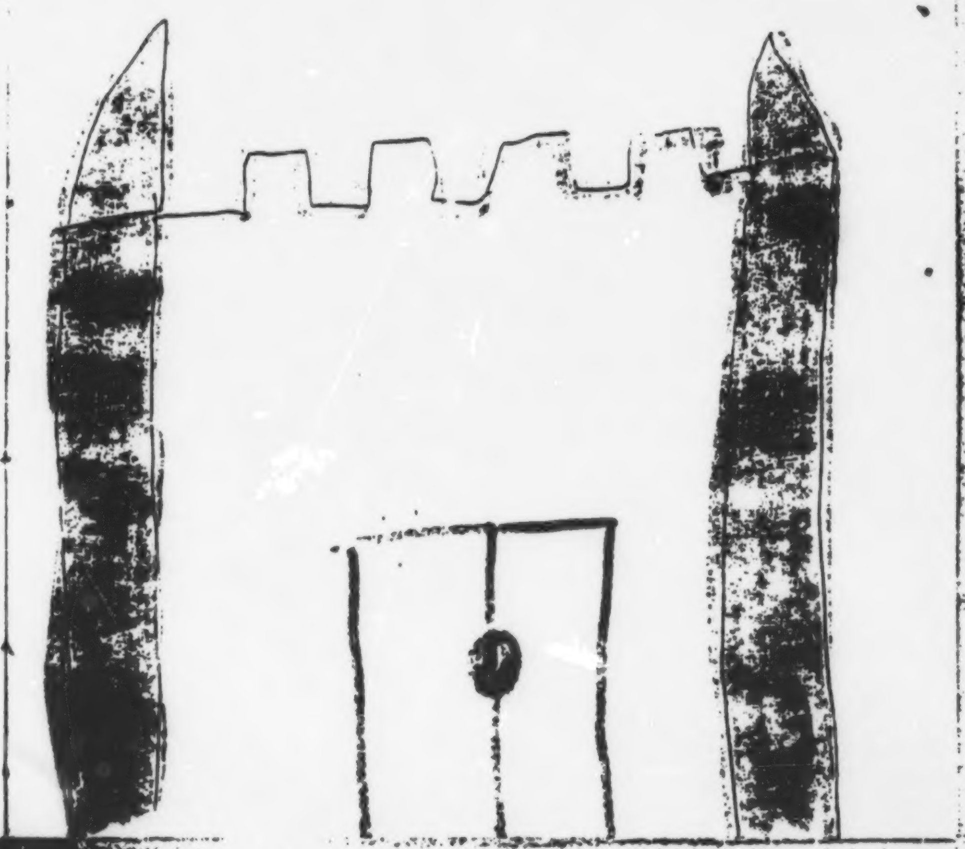


WHO KILLED MACKENZIE?

By

Samantha (g.6)

Once upon a time there was a man named Mackenzie Astin. He lived in a beautiful estate in Maui with his brother Sean and his wife Marcy. One day Mackenzie went to tell Marcy that he was going to go horse back riding but she was not in the house. Mackenzie went in the backyard and Marcy was there planting some flowers and Sean was in the hot tub.

Mackenzie told Marcy that he was going to go horse back riding with his friend Corey Haim Marcy said that he should wear the horse bac riding pedles. The pedles chain your feet t the pedles for better balance. He said to M that that is a good idea. Marcy said to Mac enzie

"Where are you going?"

"I am going to get changed and then I a going to call Corey to come here so we can g riding.

Mackencie
Polo

She said alright to him. After Mackenzie got changed and called Corey the door bell rang Ding Dong. It was Corey.

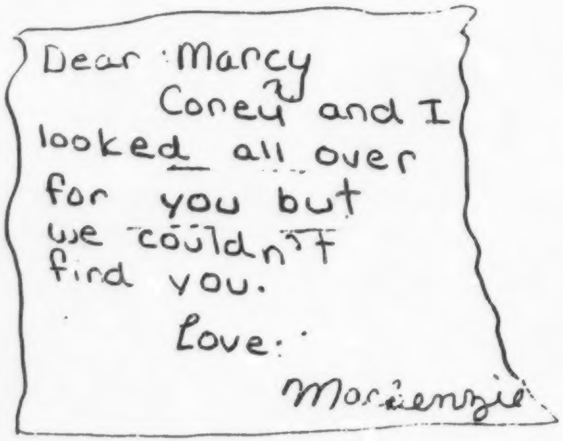
"All set to go?"

"Yup I will just find Marcy and tell her we are going to leave now."

Mackenzie and Corey couldn't find Marcy anywhere so Mackenzie wrote a letter at left it on the television it said

Dear: Marcy Corey and i looked all over for you but we couldn't find you.

Love: Mackenzie



Dear: Marcy
Corey and I
looked all over
for you but
we couldn't
find you.
Love:
Mackenzie

When They went to the stable Marcy and Sean were there.

"What are you doing here?" Mackenzie asked.

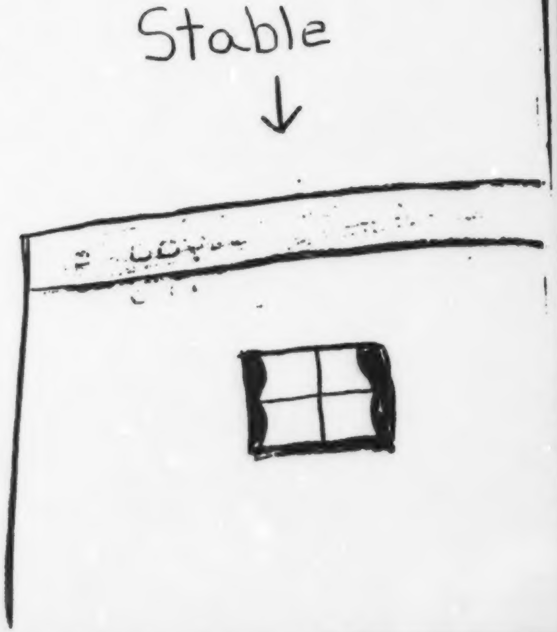
"Uhh we were just... cleaning the stable it was filthy."

"It still looks filthy to me," Corey said.

"We are leaving now
I won't be home for dinner."

"O.K. take your time."

When Mackenzie saw Starlight his horse he thought she looked kind of sick.



So Mackenzie thought he should see what is wrong and take her for a ride. Mackenaie asked Corey if he thought she looked sick and Corey said yes. When they were riding Mackenzie thought Starlight kept on going faster than usual. Starlight kept on going faster and faster Mackenzie said.

"Wow Starlight wo girl."

But she kept on going faster and faster.

All of a sudden Mackenzie tipped over to the side and couldn't get up bewause he had chained his feet to the pedles. Corey tried to help him but his horse Misty was going fast to and Corey couldn't stop Misty. Starlight was dragging Mackenzie. Corey fell off his horse but his horse kept on going and going. 1 hour later Corey found Mackenzie unconscious in the middle of the forest Starlight was dead.

Mackenzie unconscious

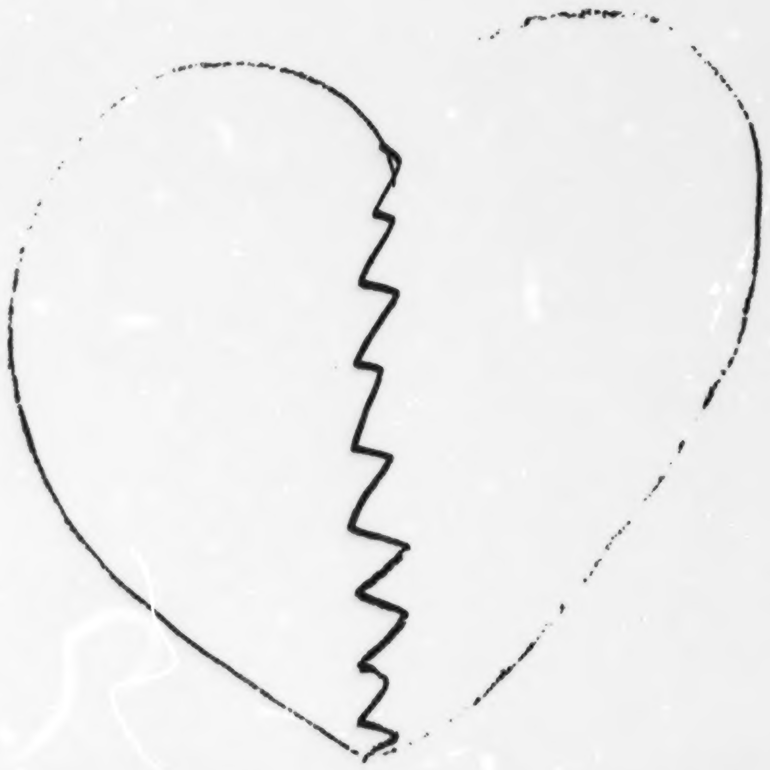
Corey picked uped Mackenzie and started to look for help. Corey searched for over an hour. Finally they gave up. All of a sudden Corey heard a noise it sounded like a car. It was a car with two hunters in it. Corey asked.

"My friend is unconscious and he a doctor fast."

"Well stranger hop in we'll take you to the Maui hospital."

"Oh thank-you sir."

When they got to the Maui hospital Mackenzie was pronounced dead. As s on as Marcy found out Mackenzie was dead her heart was broken. Corey was very sad to. Corey wasn't all that sure that Mackenzie just died because Starlight was going fast. So he called his friend Kirk Mason and told him to go see Starlight and find out why she was really going fast.



When it was morning Corey got a phone call from Kirk Mason and he said that Starlight was druged. Corey was shocked. He asked Mr. Mason who he thought did it. Mr. Mason said who ever was in the stable before you and Mackenzie, is one of the suspects. Corey said...

"Well Marcy and Mackenzie's brother Sean were in the stable when we got there they said that they were cleaning the stable because it was filthy."

Kirk
Talking
Root

Corey
talking
Polo

"Perfect evidence I will go over to Marcy's house and give her a interview."

"That would be great. Maybe Sean and Marcy druged Starlight because there is a chance they did it."

Well I'll call you tommorow Corey."

"O.K. Kirk I'll be waiting for your call after the interview. Bye Kirk."

"Bye Corey."

Kirk
Closing the
phone

Corey closing
the
phone

When Kirk went to ring the door bell at Marcy's house he forgot to call her and tell her that he was going to come over and give her an interview. When he rang the door bell Marcy came to the door.

"Yes may I help you?"

"I am Kirk Mason aninvestigator for the Maui police."

"Can I have some i.d.?"

"Of course Mrs. Astin."

"O.K. you can come in."

"I was asked to come and ask you a few questions about your husbands death."

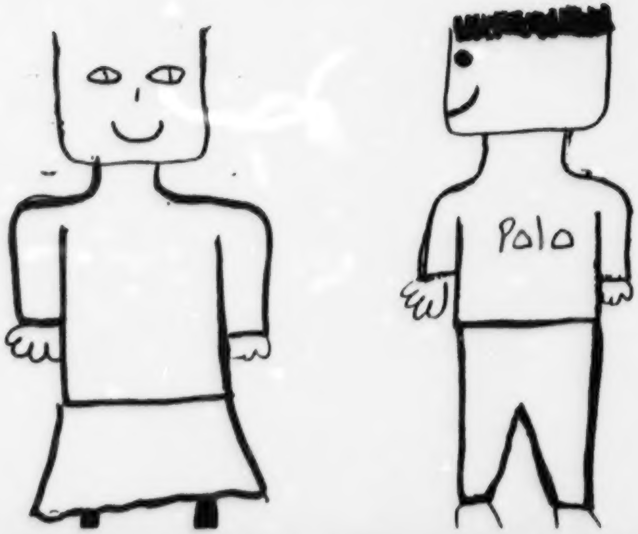
"You don't think I killed my husband do you?"

"Well thats why I'm here to ask you a few questions."

"Where were you when Mackenzie told you he was going horse back riding?"

"We were in the garden."

"Do you tell him anything?"



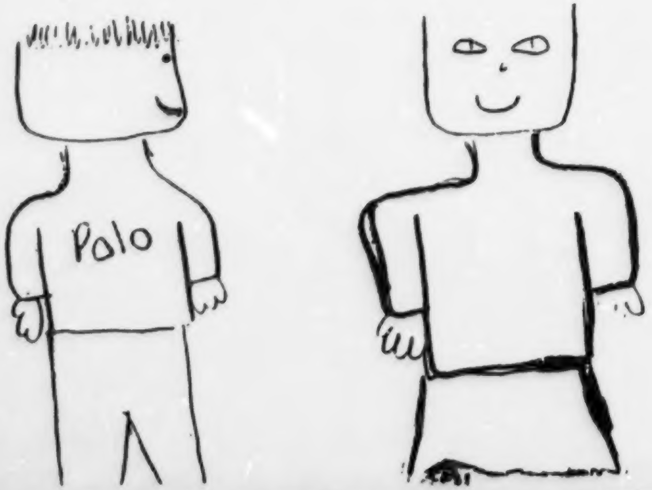
"Yes I told him to wear the horse back riding pedles that chain your feet to them for better balance."

"Why did you tell him to wear the pedles?"

"Because I bought them for his birthday and he never wear's them."

"Where were you and Sean when Mackenzie and Corey went to the stable?"

"We were in the stable cleaning it because it was filthy."



"You know that Starlight was drugged didn't you?"

"Yes I know that."

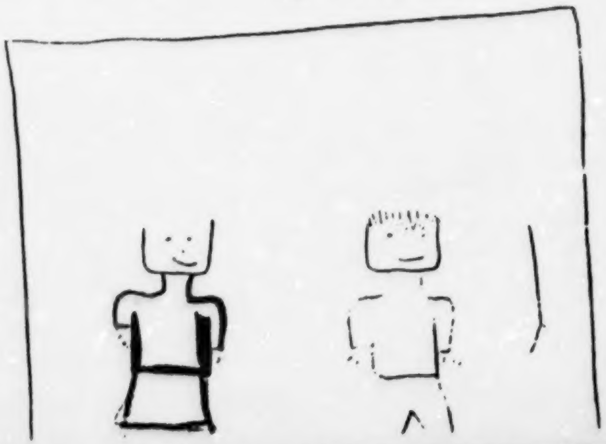
"There is a big chance that you and Sean did drug her."

"That is impossible."

"No it isn't. The story you gave me about cleaning the stable is a lead to the killer. Any way I thought you have maids to clean everything."

"We do I just uhhh wanted to clean it with Sean."

Sean & Marcy cleaning the stable



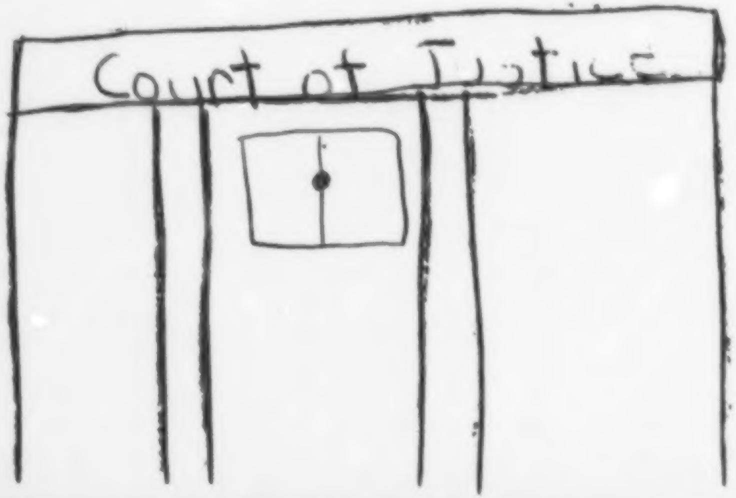
"I'm sorry to say this but your going to have to come to court with a lawyer tommorow morning with Sean."

"O.K. I will be there."

"Bye Marcy."

"Bye Mr. Mason."

When they went to court in the morning they found two other suspects the butler and the cook. Mr. Mason took finger prints of Starlight and they seemed like Marcy's prints.



The judge called Marcy up to the stand. The police man said.

"Do you swayer to tell the truth and nothing but the truth?"

"Yes I do."

The other lawyer asked questions for a long time. All of a sudden the judge said the case will continue tomorrow. When Marcy got home there were about 100 reporter's in front of the door trying to ask qustions.

Marcy said that she won't answer any questions. The next morning morning the jury said that Marcy and Sean were guilty. The officer said.

"You have the right to remain silent etc. etc.

So we found out the murderer's were Marcy Astin and Sean Astin. Corey told Mr. Mason that he was very thatful.

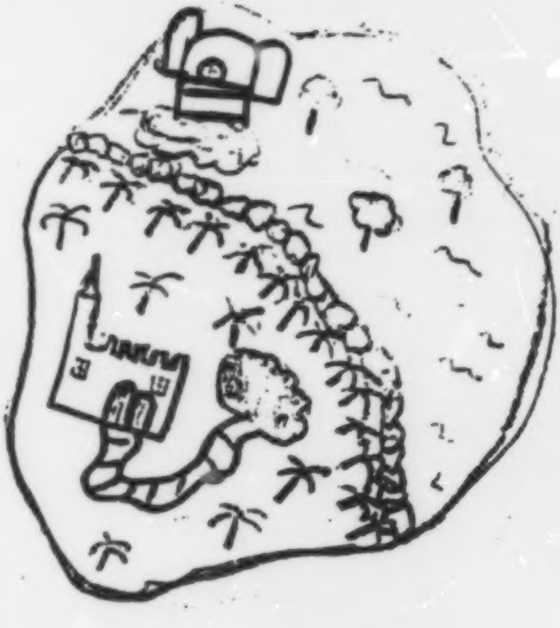
"Anytime kid anytime!"

THE END

Corey's hand
Kirk Mason's hand

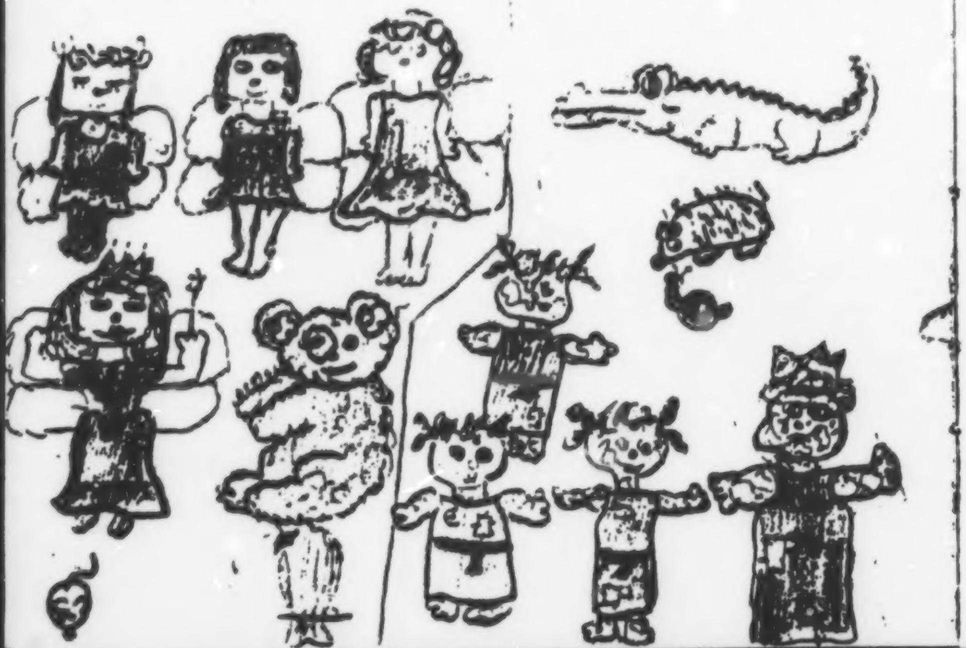
Helen (gr. 5)

There is this special land behind a waterfall it is called tropical rocky land the reason for that is that half of the of that land is beautyful, that part of the belongs to the fairies. The other part of the land, belongs to the trolls.

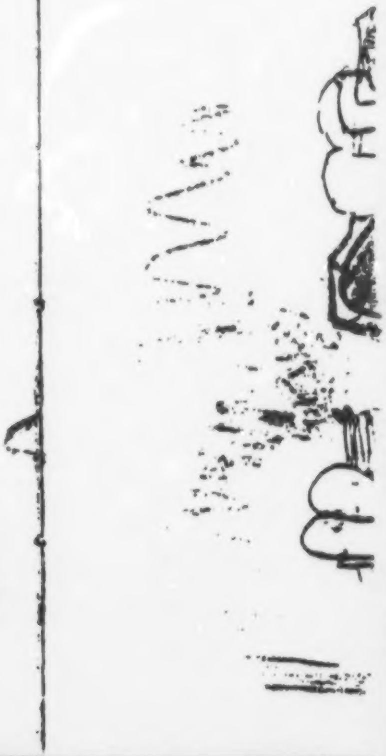


The only things living on the fairies side of the land is queen Beth and her three daughters Jecica Linda and Melissa, and their freinds the animals their is Benny the parritt Amy the Koala and Nansy the mouse. On the rocky part of the land lives queen Amellia and her three daughters Sou Lou and Evelin. And their pet animals Lou-Lou the snail Rocky the porcupine and Willy the crocodile.

The thing that separates the land are palm trees and rocks. The feries and the trolls are enemies. This is how the story begins.



One day Ne
two sisters. S
trees and rocks
live, She aske
"can I climb up
it is over on t
"no" said queen
"okay I won't"



fairies side
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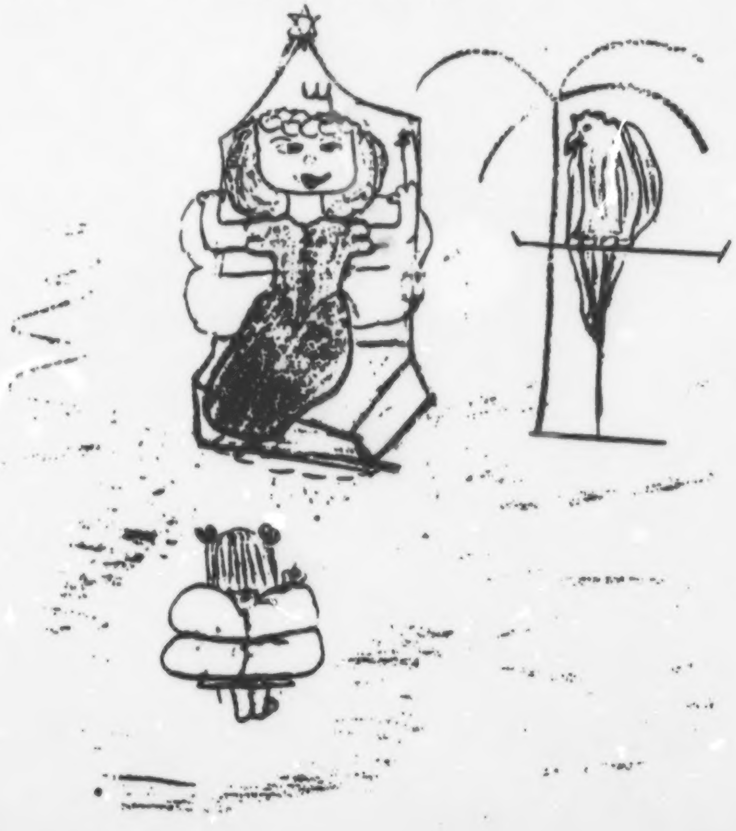
nd are palm
e trolls
begins.

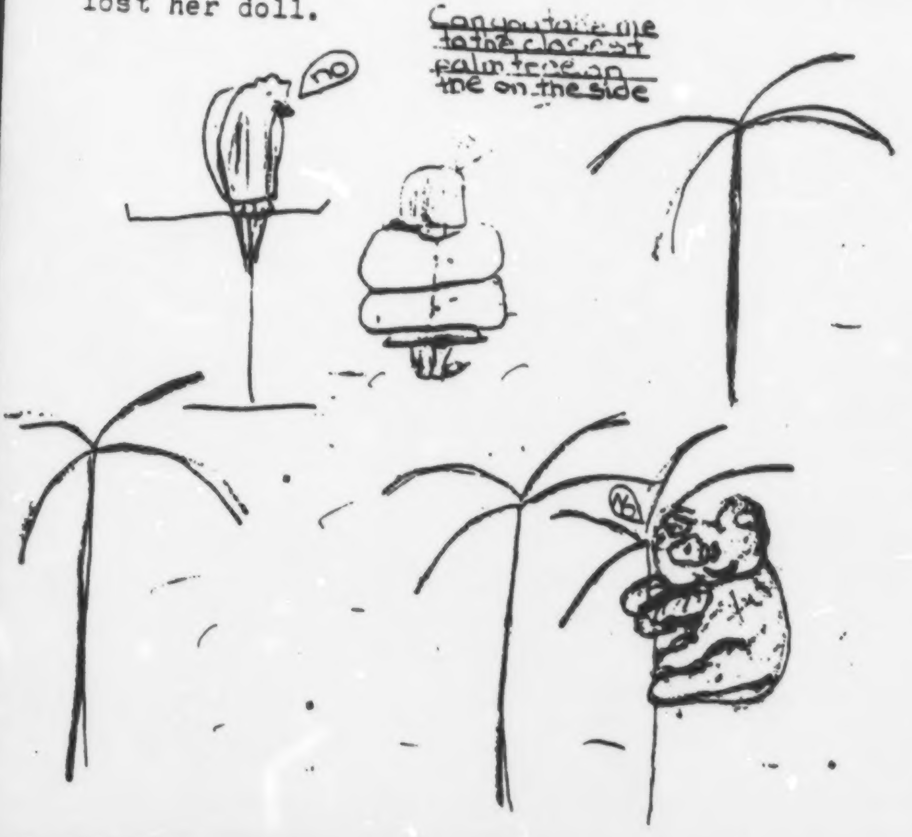
One day Melissa the yongest of the other two sisters. She wanted to clime over the palm trees and rocks to see how it is where the trolls live, She asked her mother "mom" Melissa said "can I climb up on the palm tree and see how it is over on the other side?"

"no" said queen Beth you might get hurt".

"okay I won't" said Melissa.



But she decided to go anyway. She said to penny the parott "Can you take me to the closest palm tree on the side?" "no" said Penny "youre mothere said you were not allowed". So Melissa whent to find Amy the koala. When she found Amy Melissa asked her the same question Amy said(no). So then Melissa told Nansy the mouse to take here on the palm tree because she lost her doll.


Can you take me
to the closest
palm tree on
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No

Nansy be
Don't you wa
after a whale
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Rocky th
dile found he
The troll que
But back at t
mom and siste

he said to
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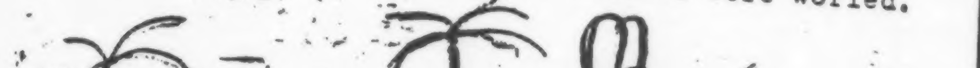
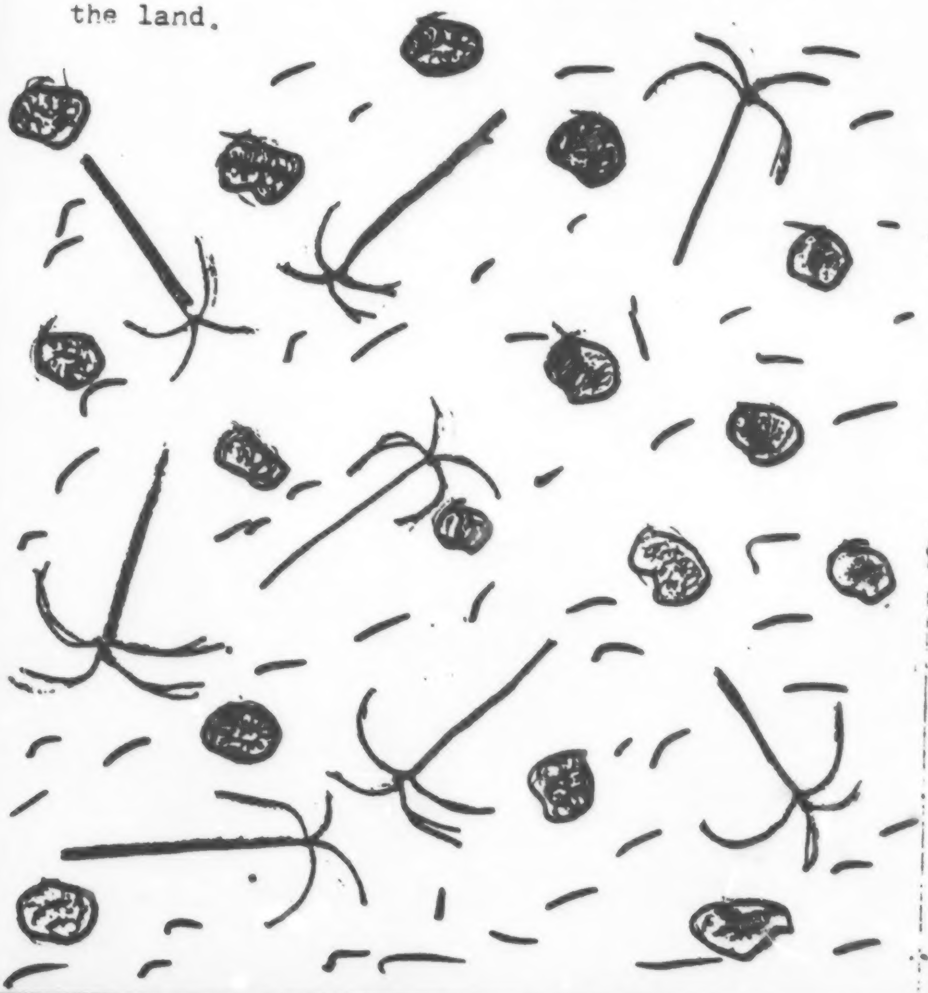
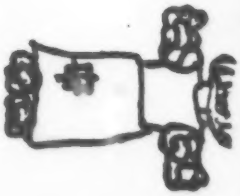
Nansy believed that, so Nansy took her up. Don't you want me to get you down said Nansy after a whale "no" said Melissa "I will call you when I want.I will call you" "okay" said Nansy, so she left. Melissa bent over to see the trolls part of the land and she fell in trolls teritory.

Rocky the porkupine and Willy the crocodile found her and took her to the troll queen. The troll queen took very good care of her. But back at the other side of the land Melissa's mo mom and sisters and friend animals were woried.



So Nansy told them what happened. So they hurried over to the boarder of the land. And they saw Rocky Willy Amelia Sou lou Evelin and lou-lou were helping Melissa over the wall. From that day they became friends and the nocked down the palm trees and rocks that separated the land.





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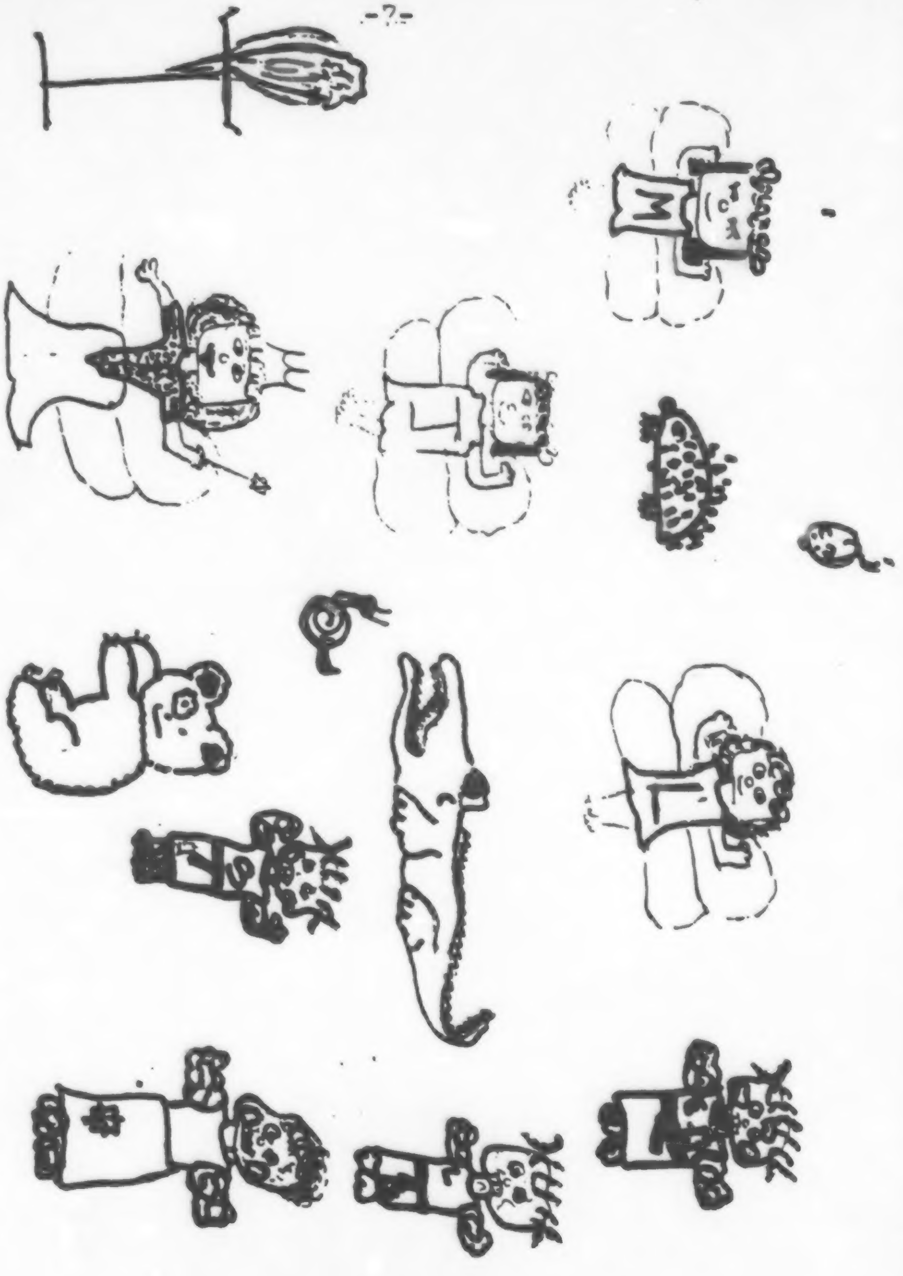

HELEN: (Gr. 6)

KIDNAPPING

In a little town in Canada there was an old wooden foster home in the centre of an old field. In the foster home lived 7 kids and 4 adults. There was Samantha Lily Crisy Tommy Georgie Benji and Anna-Maria who was the youngest of the 7. There was Mona who was in charge of everything, and Torry which was the co-boss so if anything happend to Mona she would take charge of the foster home, and there was Wilma the maid and Charlie the cleaner.

All the kids loved it in their. The only thing that they did knot like was that the to the front of the house would always stay shut, t they were always allowed to play in the back.

One day Sam the laundry man came to collect the laundry in his big laundry cart. After he left Mona went to ask the kids if any of them saw the maid.

Lily said "I saw the maid a little while ago,"

"okay" said Mona and she went to find her. When Mona finaly found the maid,she told her to go and set the beds for the kids. Mona saw Trry and told her "come on lets go get the kids for there afternoon nap."

When they whent to call the kids 5 of them were missing it was Samantha who was 3 Benji who was 2 and Georgie who was 4.

"Go check where you last saw them okay!" said Torry while picking up the youngest child Anna-Marie

Charlie came rushing over he heard about it and he said "Willma is checking allover the hou for them, but I'am not sure how they could get away the orphange has a giant fence all around it and there is no posible way to get out."

Just then Willma said

"they are no where in the house!"

"calm down"

said Torry.

"They should be somewhere around here,"

said Mona. Just as Mona said that Crisy said

"look their look look!"

Everyone turned around to see what she was pointing at.

"oh no" said Torry.

"There is a cut in the fence!" said Willma.

Everyone went over their to see if they could find anything. All they found was one of Crisy's sneakers.

Mona said "what is it doing over here?"

Willma said "Maybe Samantha was whearing them!"

"no" said Lily "Samantha was whearing her sandles"

"hey" xaid Charlie "I remember putting both sneakers in the laundry cart when Sam came this morning."

"Maybe those were another pair!" said Torry

"no" said Charlie "Those are the ones that I gave her for X-mas, and who would forget sneakers is shape of little pigs."

Are you sure you put them in the laundry cart" said Willma

"I am positive" said Charlie "look I have a list of everything I put in the cart so it can be washed, and here id Crisys list!"

And there it was on the 6th line

"Well" said Mona

"I don't know how we are supposed to find the others but I suggest we take the rest of the kids inside and then call the police!"

She didn't finish saying that when it started to pour rain, they all ran inside. Just then a tree fell on the cables and then on the front door and broke the glass.

"oh no" said Willma "now we can't phone the police"

Then all of a sudden the lights went of and all the kids started getting scared. Charlie said I think we should all go in one room to keep together

"lets go in Monas room since it's the biggest" said Torry

"Okay" said Mana

"I'll go get some blanckets and candles" said Willma, "can we come" said Crisy Tommy and Lily.

"sure" said Willma you can all came.

They went of. Charlie said I think we should wait here till they come. After a while they heard a scream! That sounds like Willma and the kids said Charlie

Come on lets go and see whats the matter said Torry

They checked where they were all they found was a card and it said Sams laundry mat 163p4987

Torry said "I never new Sam had cards for his store already handed out, he said they would be handed out in Oct. and it is still August and he is the only one that has copies of it.

"Come on" said Charlie "we got 6 kids and a maid to find!"

"What do you mean" said Torry
Look first we found the sneakers and then we find this card!"
"I get itSam was supposed to have tricked the kids in comming with them him and he dropped the sneaker outside and the card inside by mistake come on we will go through the hole in the back come on lets go now."

When they were at the front of the store they saw Sam looking out of the window and then ru
ning in the room at the back. When they got in their the back room was locked Charlie sai
"get out of their Sam we know you have them"

"So you know" said Sam as he opend

the door and locked it after he was out. then he took a pistol out of his pocket and said "take one step and you die!" Torry pulled of her shoe and hit him on the head. Sam fell down head first Charlie grabbed the gun and Torry phoned the police. they opened the door everyone was fine except for Willma who had fainted the police came and took Sam away.

Hri : grade 3

1) Center ice

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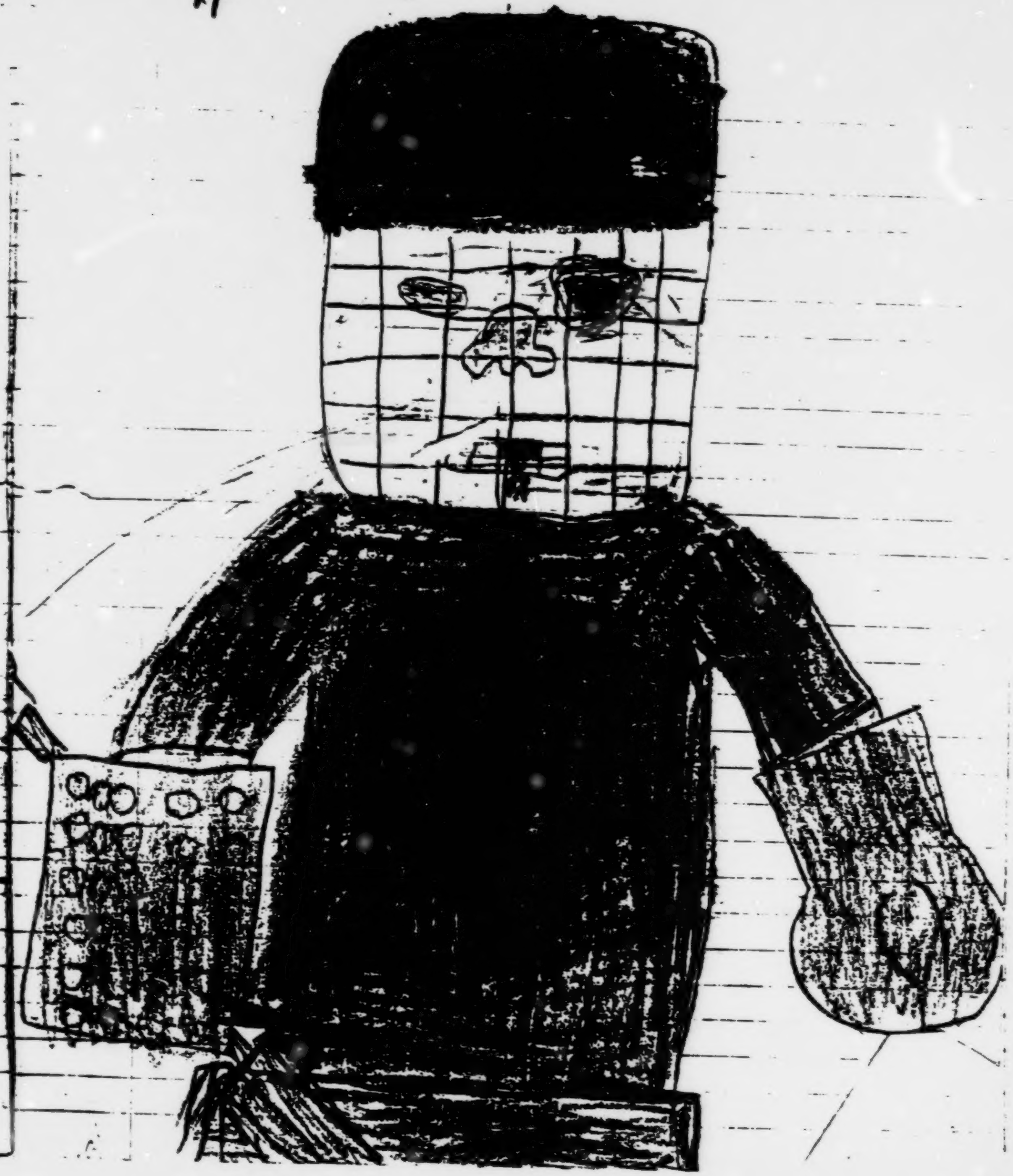

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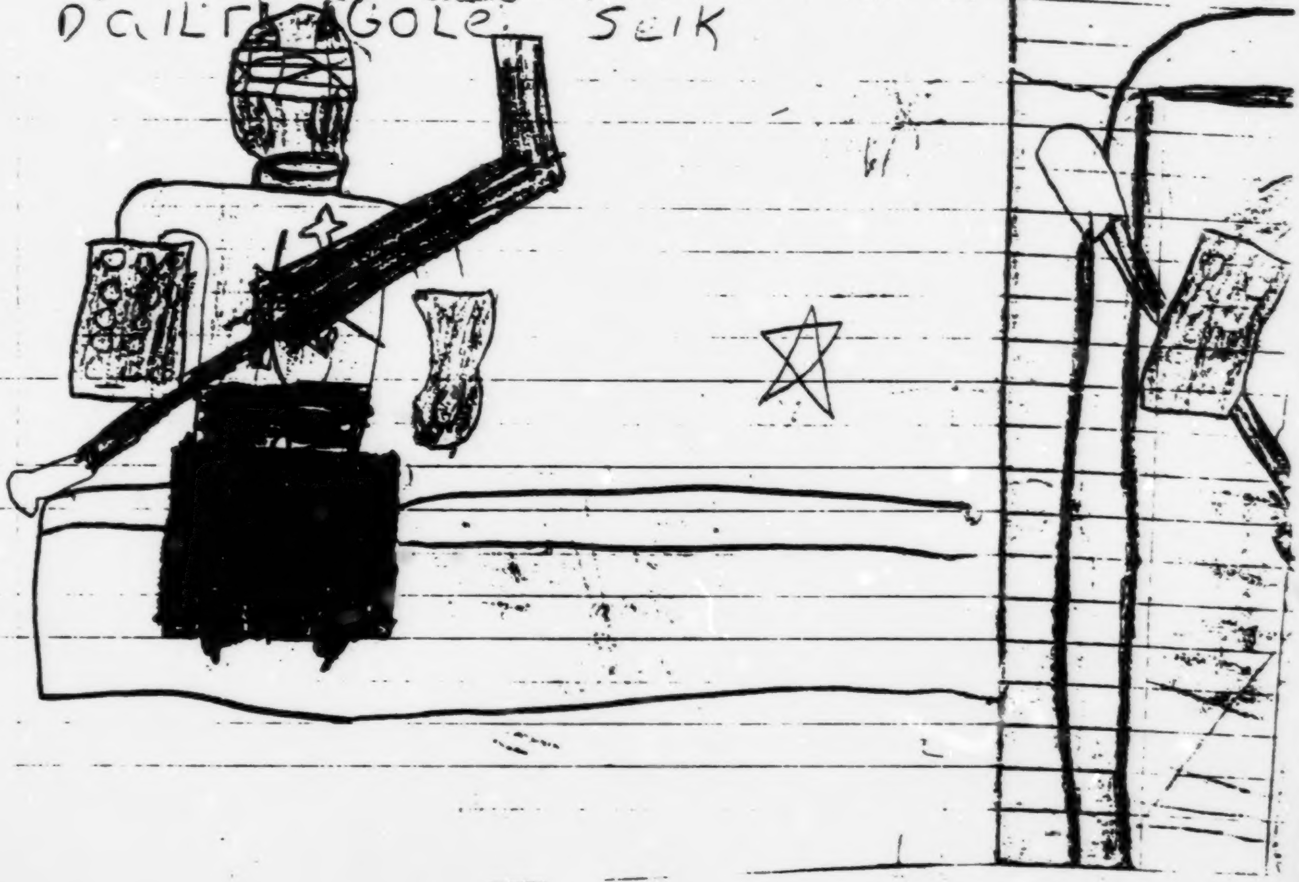

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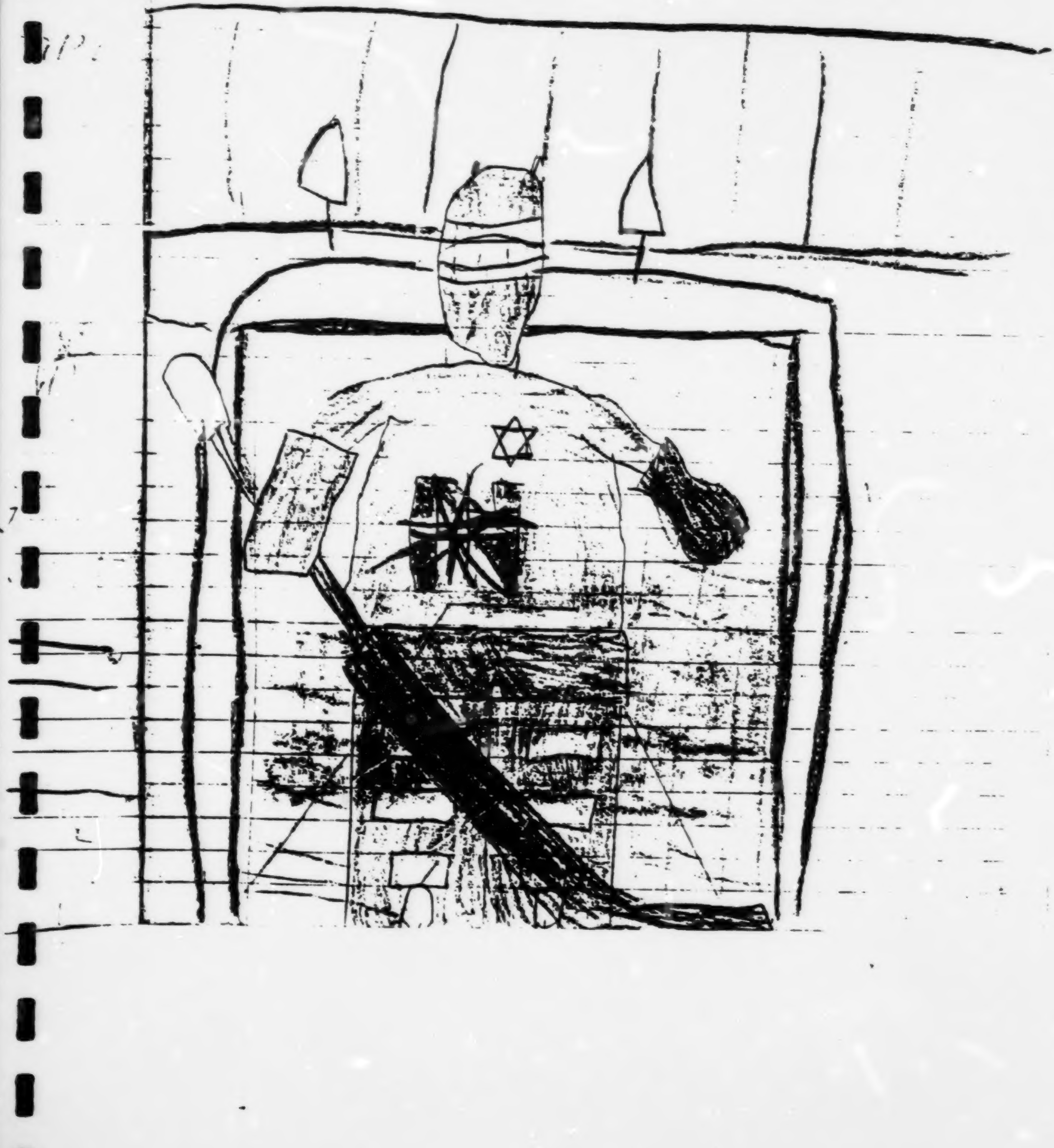

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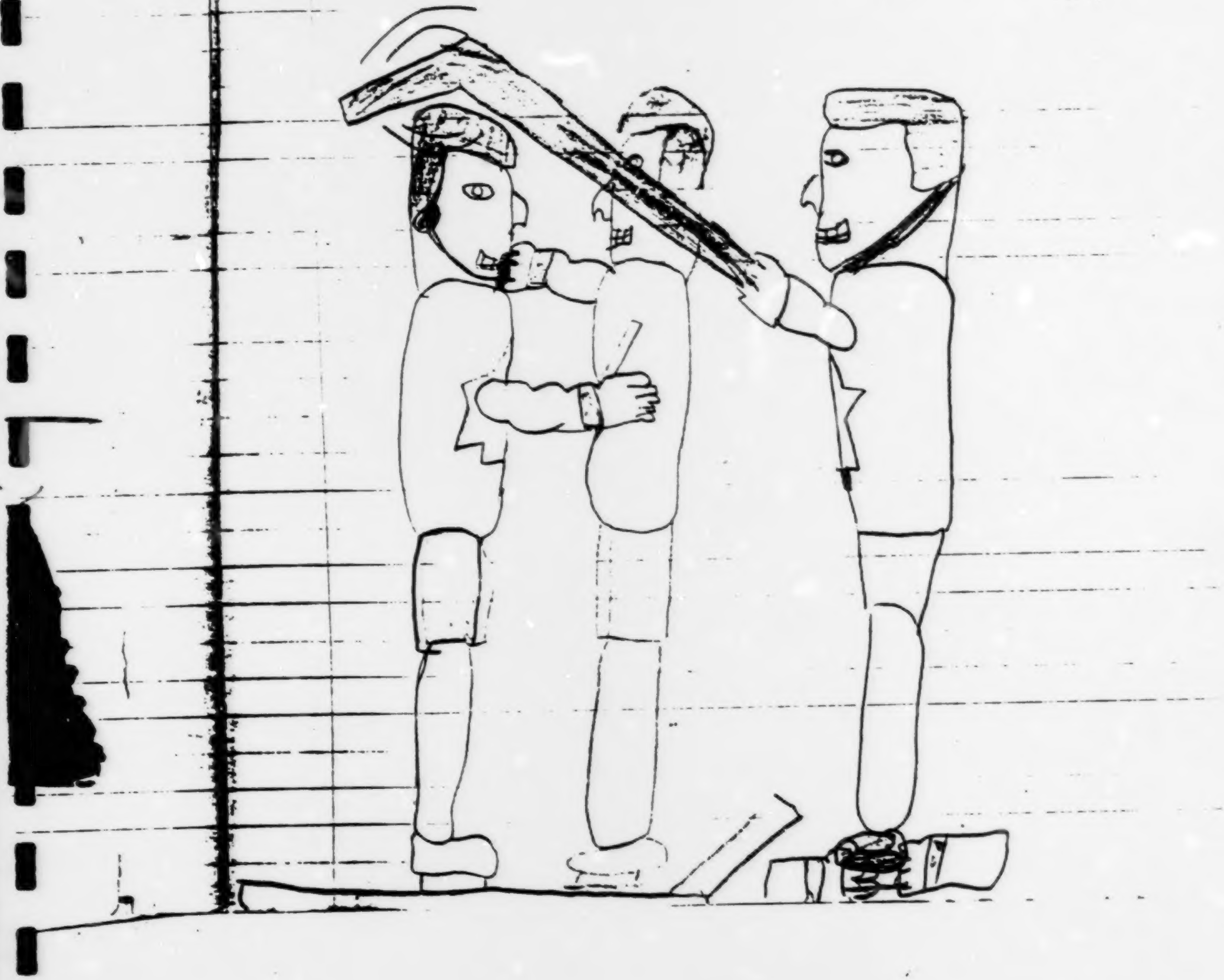
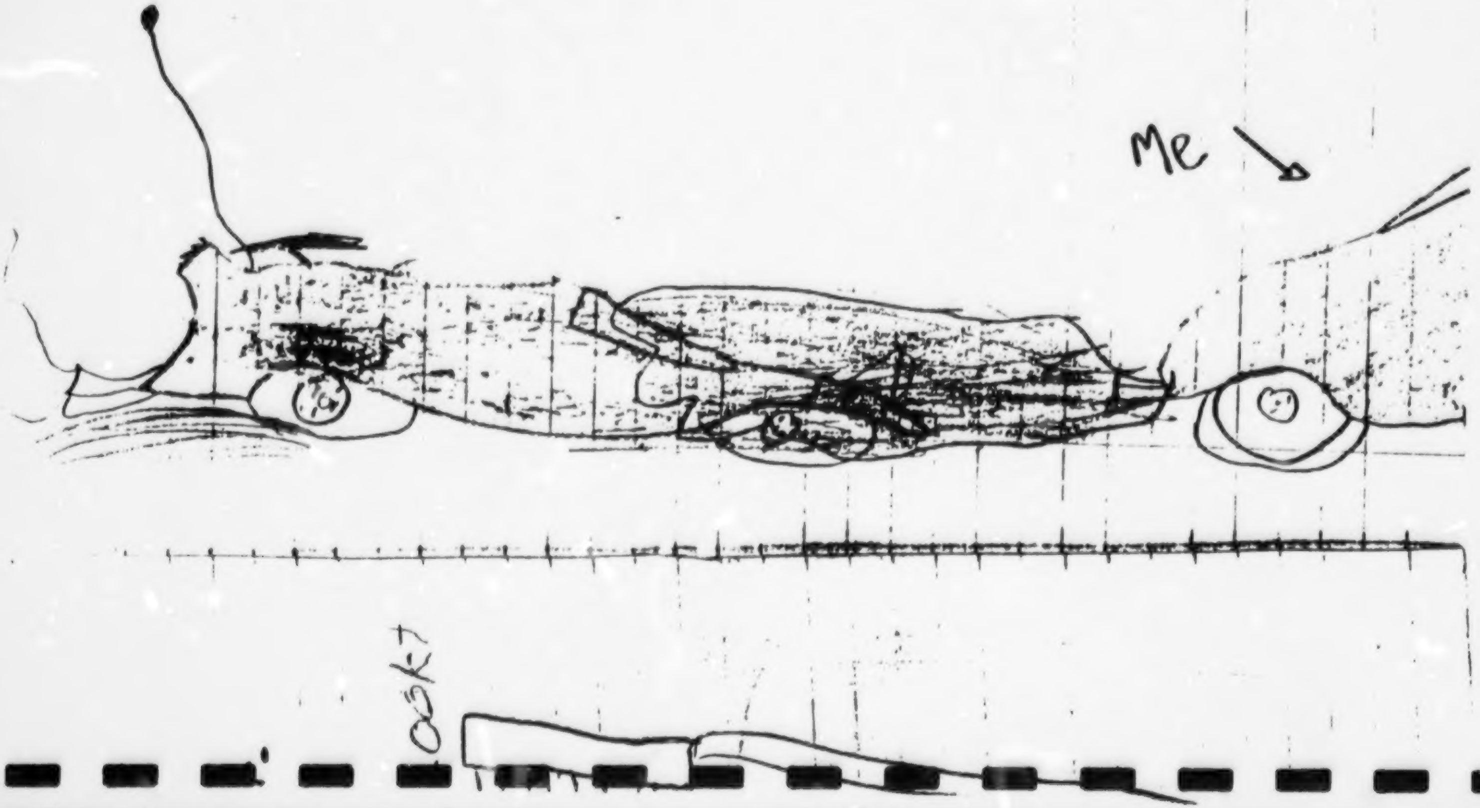


The Next Day.

I wa[illegible] in My ca[illegible].

i W[illegible] Diving

Then I H[illegible] It L[illegible]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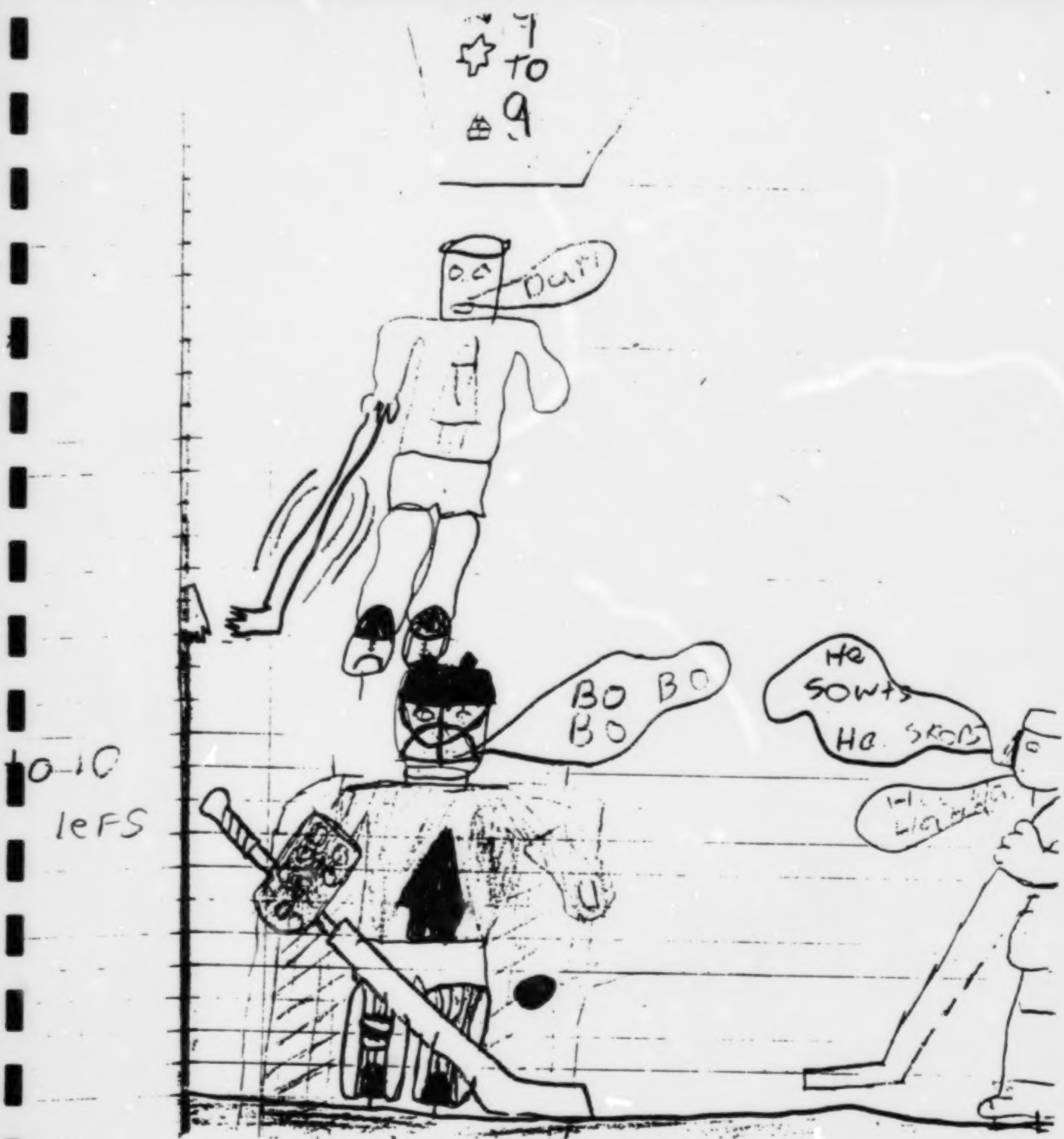
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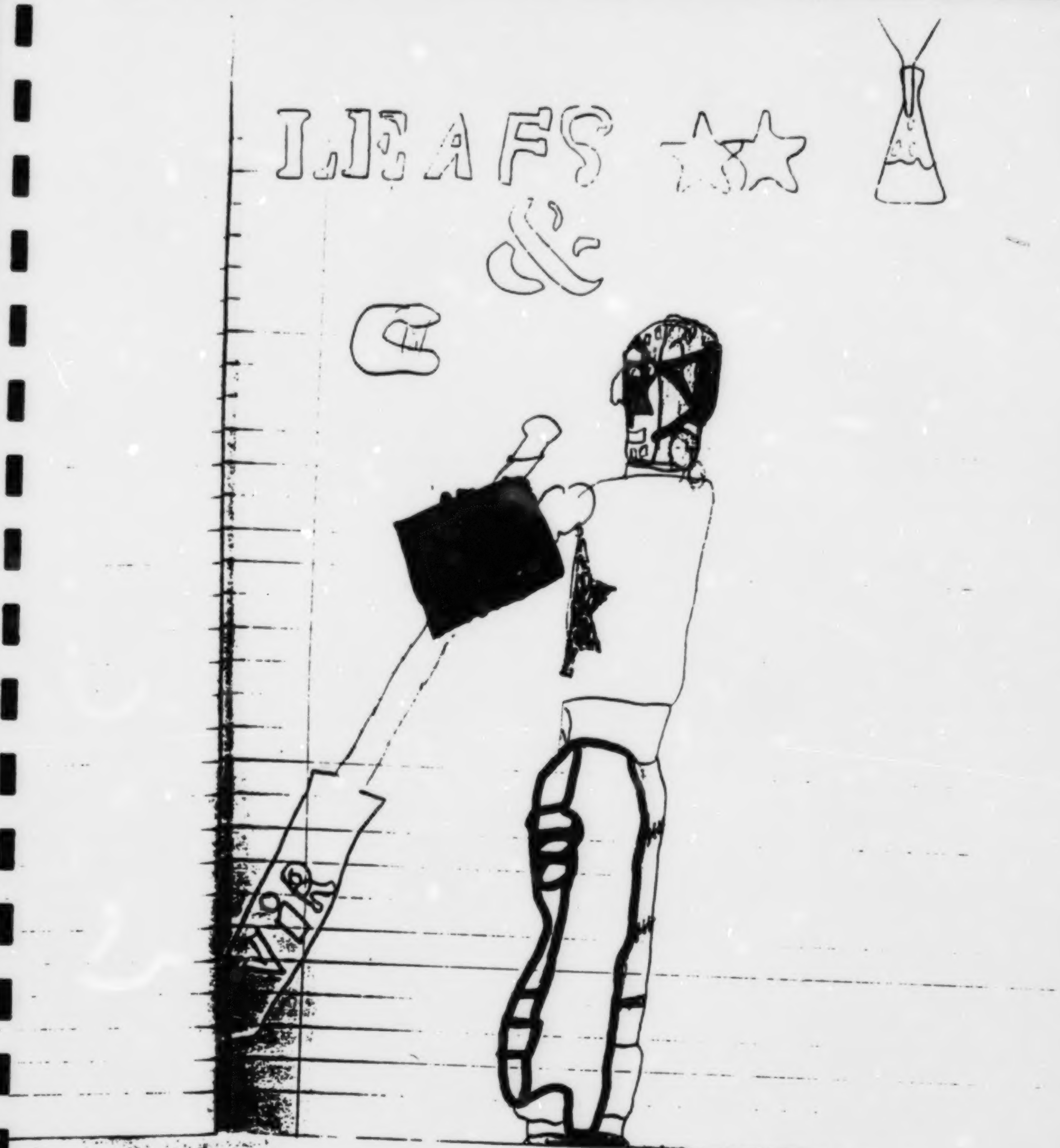
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C

Ari : grade 4

OLympic Games in Calgry

Long ago Befor the BiBLL the Greece Haun [illegible] [illegible] Games in OLyi They run all aroun Greece With The Torth To TaLL Greeke ~~To TALL The~~ People that the OLympic Games Hav [illegible] The Games wer The Javlin Throw and SorPoT and Diskus and PoLvoring 1988 OLympicGames The Games WiLL Be Hald Fib 13 1988 The Torth is on its way To Caigary. The Games will Be SED Racing and Skeeing and Maye More Games

THE MAGIC COFFIN

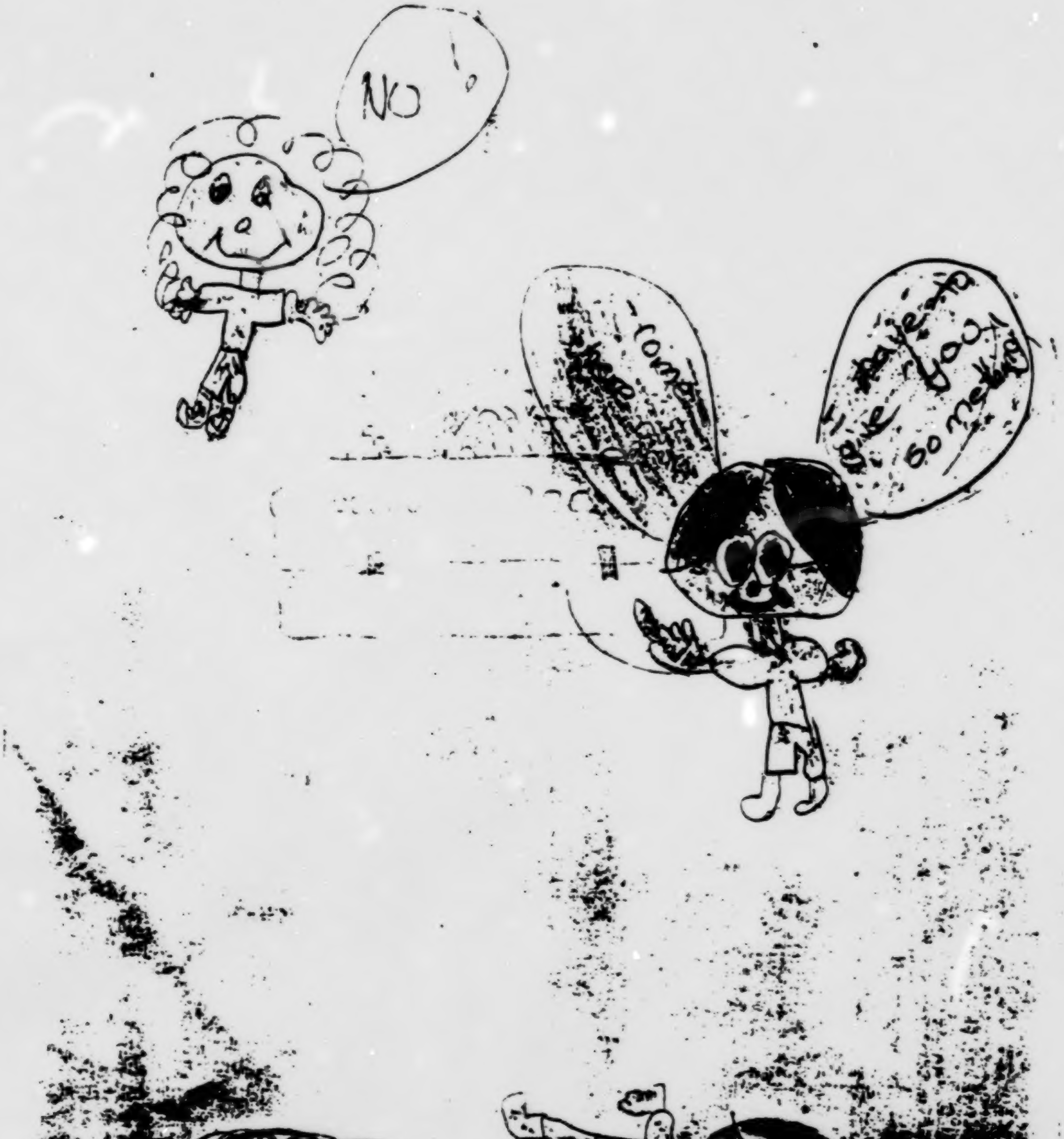
Nektaria

(gr 3)

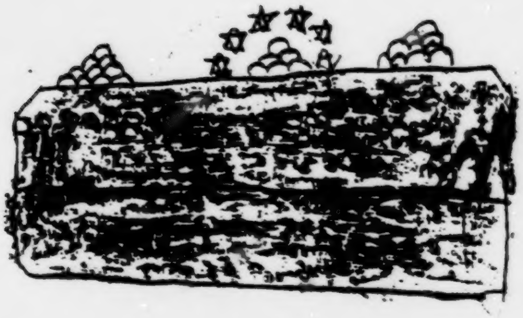
I dedicate this
book to Rhea

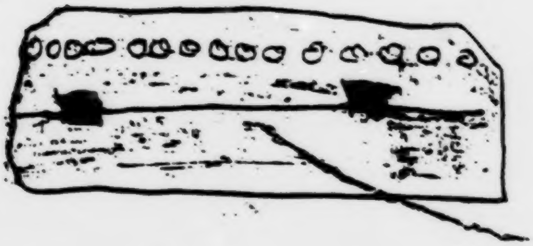
After my uncles death my parents and my uncles friends were talking about my uncle they were saying "where did he get that will and all that money" I could not stand them talking about my uncle so I went to the place where my uncles coffin was then I found it I opened it up to see him but he was not there!

I went towrds the coffin and fell in all of a suddenly I was flotting in the coffin. Then I saw lots of dead people Just then I saw my uncle. He was calling me to go somewhere with him. I said no he said I have to give you something he gave me the gold and lots of money and said this is for you and there was 1 thousand dollers.

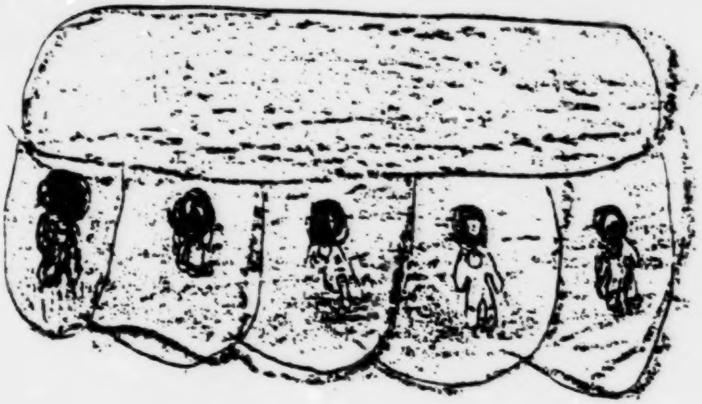

NO !
come
I have to give you so methig

I said thank you and I said I have to go home, how do I get out of here. Then he said stay with me so he can play floting tag flatting tag and I go "okay" and we started the game and all of a sudden I was inside the coffin lying in there I left that place and went home ~~with~~ ~~the~~ money and the will.





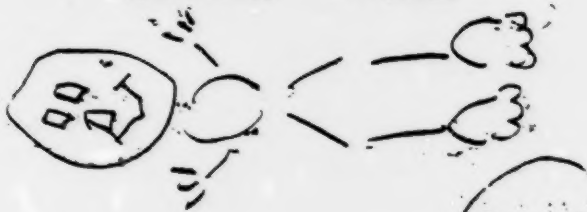
And my mother asked me where did
you get that I got it from someone
I know. She said tell, I'm not going
to tell you better what, but if I tell
you wouldent belived me. Just tell me.
"Okay" I got it from uncle John.
Ha ha Ha Ha you got it from uncle
John Uncle John is dead. I told you
trost me. I went to his coffin and I
opened it so I looked Im and In and he
was not there what I looked Im again
and I tell through and I saw
him and gave it to me. yah sure?
Yes it is true.

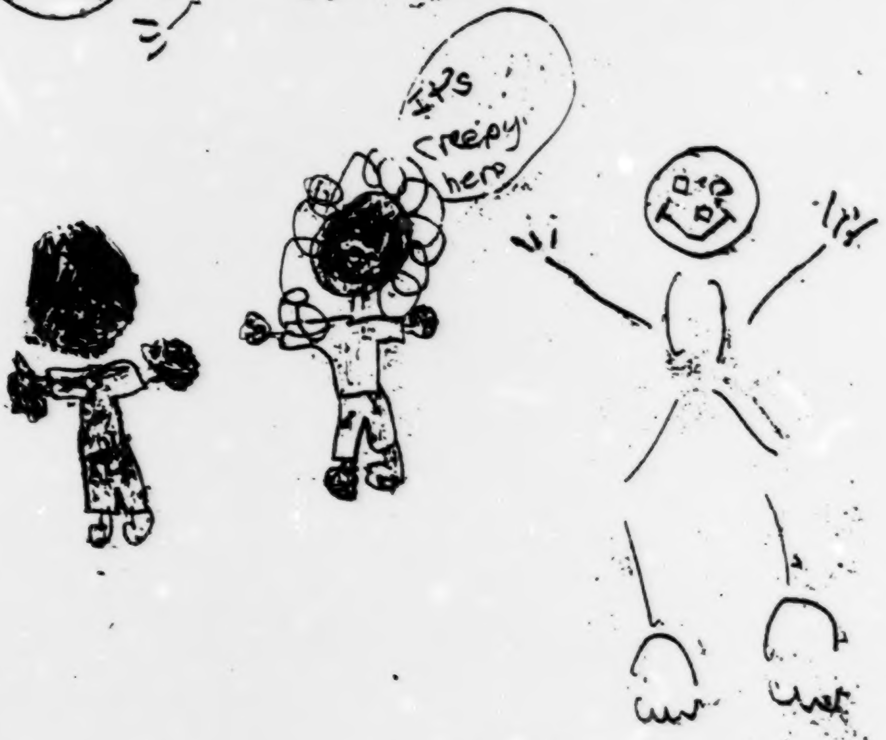


⑤

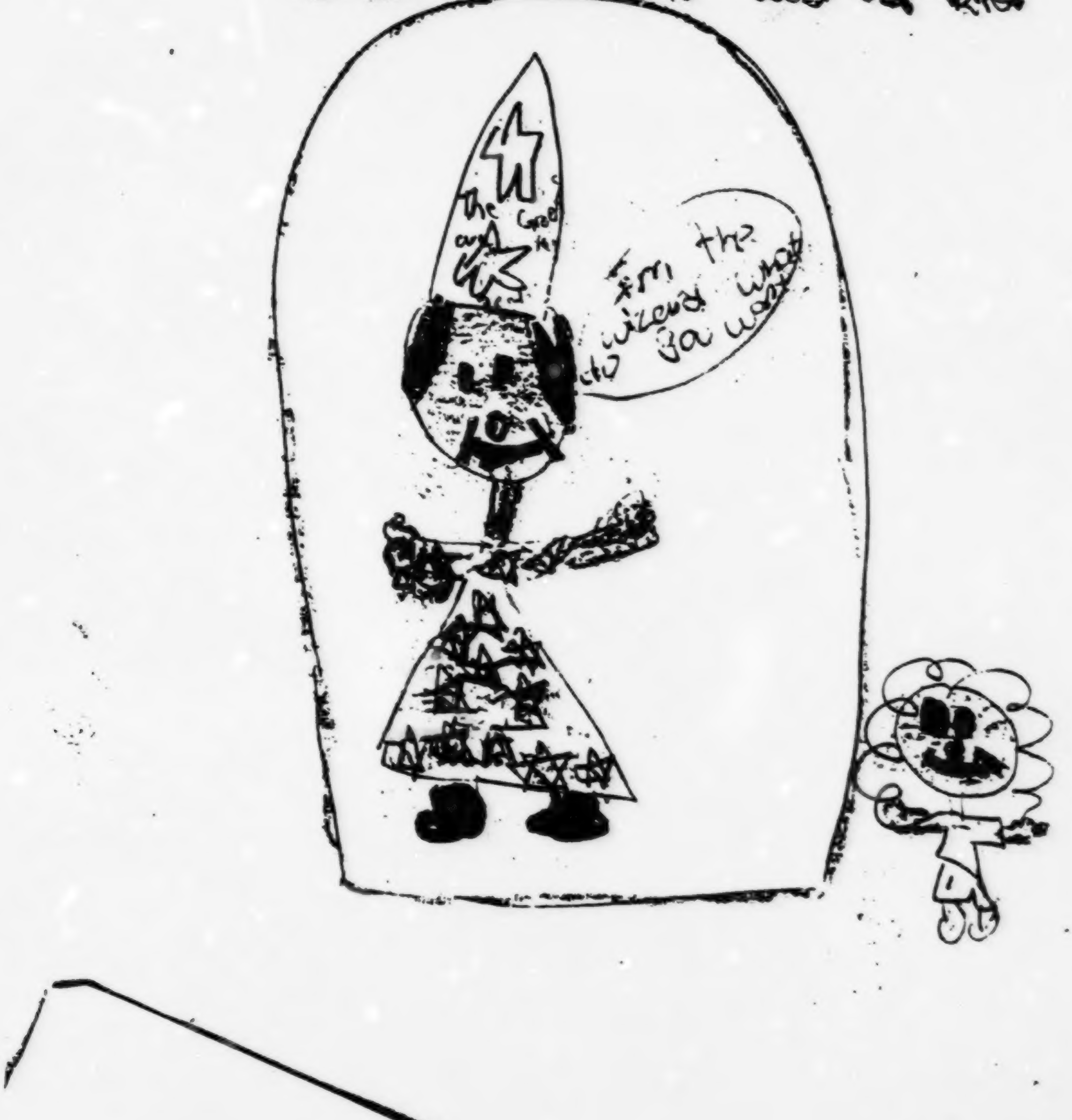
Whell I still do not belived you
but give us the money I said no
and they all tried to grab it
off me and all of a sudden the
money ript and they all threw
the ript money at me and
I pickt all the pieces up and
took it to my uncle.
and he said it will go back
together in a minute and just then
they went back together and
I thanked him

So he said I will give you the [illegible] only if you do me a favour for me. And I said what is it and he said to go to the wizard's and tell him if you can have THE GHOST TO HUMAN BOTTLE and tell him it is for [illegible] when he forgot to come to your house when he was a kid "okay" "okay" I said and I went to the wizzards house

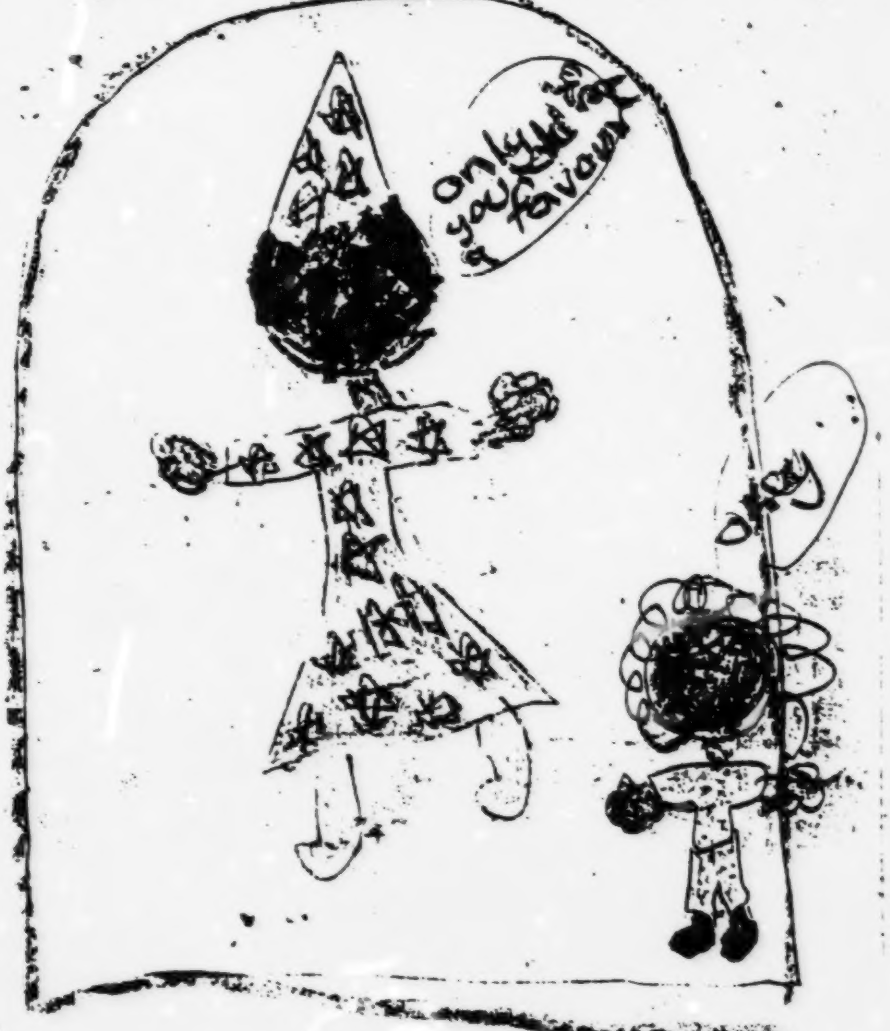




I Knocked on his door and
he opened it up and he said
what do you want and I said
I have the "Ghost to Heaven"
"Gotta for what for my uncle he is
dead and I saw him. And he
said "What is your uncles name?"
I said his name is John
The ghost to come to your
house where he was a kid


The Great
I'm the wizard what do ya want

Oh that John [illegible]
you the bottle that [illegible] away"
will you do me a favour [illegible]
[illegible] it is when your uncle
comes back to life I want you to
bring him to me and I said okay
and I left with the bottle and
I went to my uncle and he
said to go out so I can
change into a human because
no one must not look at
a ghost changing to a human
again so I said okay


only if you [illegible] a favour
okay

so I told him what the wizard told me to come to his house when you come back a human again and we stayed there for 1 hour, and then we left and we went to my house and I said listen to me I have a surprise for you and here he is uncle John and he came in and everyone was yelling and saying a ghost a ghost and I said it's not a ghost it is uncle John [illegible] so he went through the wall

thank you for this
I for welcome

I score
ouch

but he didin't go through
and they said he really is alive
he's alive I told them so they
said how did you come alive
it is a long storie you woldint
want to know come on it
would take two days to tell
you all so they said okay
and he said [illegible] made
me come back alive so
thats why I'm giving her the
money so they said she
dose deserved it you diserved
It the whole time.

THE END

ouch.
He's alive

Grade 4

Vektaria:

My Grandmothers awful medicine

My grandmother Came a few days ago and she brought her medicine. She hated it but she had to take it. But one day she did not have any more medicine so my mother sent me to get some more but when I got there they did not give it to me [illegible] said she doesn't need it how do you know we should know because whe are the pharmacists. Thats your problem give me the medicine or the recipe. We [illegible] no [illegible] I Said and then I left. That night I went to the [illegible] and stole the recipe, and [illegible] of the medicine. to [illegible] to [illegible] like and [illegible] come to sleep. the next morning I started off to make the medicine and the recipe [illegible]

2 Slices of mice
1/2 blood
23 Cups of teeth
mush about 2 cups of skin
add 9 budie pieces
1000 dewel tangs
2 books

I said that is grose and I said It's for my grandmothers sake. So I started to make the medicine. It was hard to find most of the ingredients but for the blood I went to the graveyard to get them. By the time my grandmother got up I had finished the precription and gave her the medicine and she went bazurk. Later I went to the pharmacy and I told them what had happend and they told me that they trated the recipe and made up our own. Now she might go bazurk crazy or wild for the rest of her life so you better watch out. Then I left and started to cry and I said why did it have to happen to me. Why. Then I went home to sleep. The next Morning I went to the pharmacy and I beged please help my grandmother she is going to die. "Okay" the only thing that we need from you is to get the things. "Okay" but you will promise me that you will not pull a trick on me if you do you will have to pay my grandmothers funeral. We promise now we will make you our recipe and it said

9 pices of your grandmothers hair
2 pices of celery
2 pices of carrots
1 cup of dieting pills
2 slices of cheese
2 cups of coffe

and then I came back and Said I have everything and they started the medicine. Then it was done the gave me the medicine and I went home and gave it to my barzurky grandmother who was barzurkacized and then she thanked me. She kept on taking the medicine even though it tasted awful.

THE END

Mano

(g. 3)

Wofers [illegible]
aWOOOOOo!!!

It all started on a spoucie nite there wear no stars in the ski. Only the shimering moon in the dark. I was outside taking a walk and thar was [illegible] pouls from the privios [illegible]. And I was the only won outside. On the wae I was filing very strang. I dindint know that I was changing into a Warewolf. I looked down and I saw mi salf in the poudoui. I had tow teeth coming down i fere all over mi boddy. And than the moon was coverd up by the clouds and I was back to normal.

I cwidle [illegible] [illegible]. And Wont to bed. The next day I work up and got dress and got mi books and wont to school. At school I w

paing inouch atanchon becouse
I capt on thinking about
wait hapind lust Knite. Than
the techer asket me a cu-
shton but sins I wasant
paing atanchon I didint
know the cuashton and
it [illegible]. Than the tech-
er sent me home with
a Bondol of Work. !

The wirst was yet too
come. When I got home
I stodid reel hard.
And than it happend

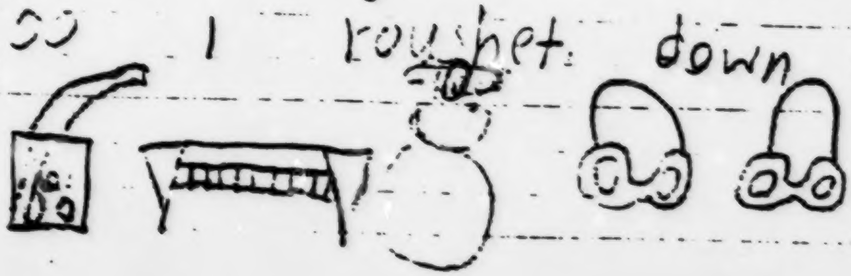
again I changend into a Waer wolf I looket like a WOLF!!! Than mi father walk in and he said Waits going on in there and than he saw me and I saw him he was a Waer wolf too and mi sister and mi brother and mi mother. And than mi mother said you can only change for tow risons.

1. A fool moon.
2. Anger.

Thes tow things Will

make you change. And than she told me all the facts of a wair wolf. Than we all changed back into people. Than I weint too bed and I hoild too the moon all knit. The next day I wouke up and I was lait for school so I got drest and I Waint to school. And Wan I got too schobl thar was no school, so I Waint back home.

When I got home
I dropet mi books
on the couche and
ran up the stairs and
waint to mi room and
locket the door shote.
And waint to sleep. After
tow hours of sleeping I
woik up thar was nobby
at home just me! And then
tow bergiers broke in
so I roushet down stairs.

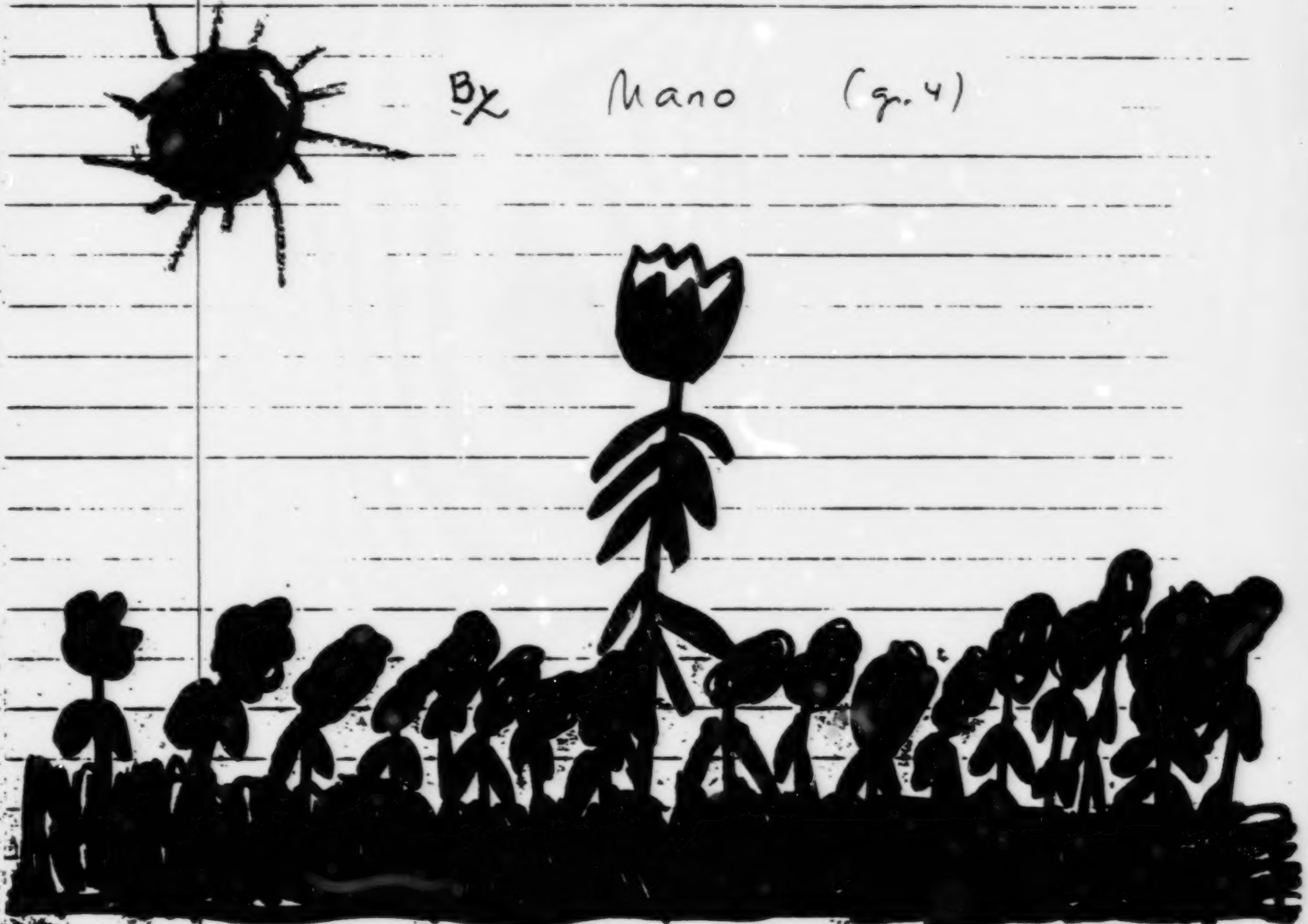


So i got mad and
changed like a ware-wolf
and they ran so
fare that they were
never [illegible] [illegible]. Then
the rest of the family
came and said ware have
you been [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
I scared them off Now
ware wer you. We wer singing
so we talked it over and
we all leved happily ever AFTER
The End.

FLOWERS

Flowers smell good, flower are sweet
they're right under your feet.
Flowers stay, they never leave.
Flowers are beautiful, flowers are neat.

By Mano (g. 4)



IN THE FUTURE I WANT TO BE..

A Rich person and I want to drive a gold plated limo with a ruby on the front of the hood. And I want to own a manchon that's bigger then casaloma and equeped with tennise courts and and a large swimming pool. And I want to travel all around the world. And I want to own the Eiffel tower And 50,000 dollors in orange Juice stokes.

THE END

MANO: G.4

APPENDIX 2

TESTING AND ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS

SOLOM
Student Oral Language Observation Matrix

Student's Name ______ ______ Grade ______ Observer's Name __________ Date: ________

A. Comprehension 1. Casual social Conversation	Cannot be said to understand even simple conversation.	1	2	3	4	5	Understands highly complex discussions without difficulty
2. Curriculum-focused Conversation	Cannot be said to follow even simple classroom discussions.	1	2	3	4	5	Understands classroom discussions involving highly complex academic content.
B. Fluency 1. Social Fluency	Speech is so halting and fragmentary as to make conversation virtually impossible.	1	2	3	4	5	Speech in everyday conversation demonstrates command of highly sophisticated expressions and structures.
2. Curriculum-Social Fluency	Speech is so halting and fragmentary as to make verbal classroom participation virtually impossible.	1	2	3	4	5	Classroom speech demonstrates command of highly sophisticated expressions & structures
C. Vocabulary	Vocabulary limitations so extreme as to make conversation virtually impossible.	1	2	3	4	5	Speech in everyday conversation demonstrates command of highly sophisticated expressions & structures
D. Intelligibility of Communication	Pronunciation problems so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.	1	2	3	4	5	Language use reveals highly sophisticated vocabulary and idioms
E. Grammar	Errors in grammar and word-order so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.	1	2	3	4	5	Child frequently exhibits exceptional control over grammatical usage that enhances his/her communication

Based on your observation of the pupil, circle the number which best indicates the pupil's abilities.

STUDENT SURVEY
GRADE TWO

MATH CONCEPTS

Student's Name ________________________ Rated by: ____________________

School and Grade ______________________ Date of Rating: _____________

Rate the current performance of the child in the following areas related to math and math concepts by circling the appropriate number in each case. Number 5 is the **highest** rating and number 1 is the **lowest**. The numbers 2 through 4 represent degrees between high and low. Circle number 3 if you believe the student's ability to be average on a particular skill.

In rating each item, disregard your ratings for that pupil on every other item; try not to let general impressions colour your judgements about specific skills.

ASSESSMENT OF PROBLEM SOLVING

1. **Perseverance**	Doesn't complete tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	Completes all tasks.
2. **Confidence**	Is anxious.	1	2	3	4	5	Is confident.
3. **Willingness**	Refuses new challenges.	1	2	3	4	5	Seeks new challenges.
4. **Breadth**	Works at a narrow range of problems using few skills and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	Works at a wide variety of problems using diverse skills and strategies.
5. **Creativity**	Imitates the solutions to problems provided by others.	1	2	3	4	5	Is very competent at creating new problems for own enjoyment.

ARITHMETIC

6. **Directions**	Cannot follow multi-step directions.	1	2	3	4	5	Follows multi-step directions with ease.
7. **Counting by ones, twos, fives, tens**	Cannot count in different units.	1	2	3	4	5	Counts in different units with ease.
8. **Ordinal numbers**	Does not use numbers first to tenth.	1	2	3	4	5	Uses numbers first-tenth with ease.
9. **Place Value**	Understands sequence in ones place.	1	2	3	4	5	Can arrange 2 or 3 digit numbers in order.
10. **Add/subtract**	Cannot add or subtract two digit numbers where re-	1	2	3	4	5	Can add or subtract two digit numbers, where

	grouping is not necessary, even with concrete materials.						regrouping is necessary, without concrete materials.
11. **Multiply/Divide**	Addition and multiplication, subtraction and division are considered unrelated activities.	1	2	3	4	5	Multiplication is understood as repeated addition and division as repeated subtraction.
12. **Fractions**	Cannot use concepts of 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/10.	1	2	3	4	5	Can apply concepts of 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, 1/10 in a variety of appropriate contexts.

MEASUREMENT

13. **Attributes**	Does not use appropriate vocabulary for attributes (e.g., heavy, long, cold).	1	2	3	4	5	Uses appropriate vocabulary for attributes.
14. **Estimating**	Lacks accuracy in estimating the number of non-standard units for length, area, mass, volume.	1	2	3	4	5	Is accurate in estimating units in classroom and everyday activities.
15. **Comparative terms**	Uses comparative terms inappropriately or not at all.	1	2	3	4	5	Employs comparative terms accurately in a variety of contexts.
16. **Money**	Does not know the relationships among the coins: penny, nickel, dime, quarter.	1	2	3	4	5	Understands the relations among coins and can make change for $.25.

17. **Time**

	Concept of and duration is not related to telling time with the clock.	1	2	3	4	5	Can time the duration of events with the clock.

GEOMETRY

19. **Sorting**	Cannot sort objects/ shapes and explain the rule.	1	2	3	4	5	Can sort objects by several criteria and can explain the rules.
20. **Spacial vocabulary**	Has not developed a vocabulary which describes and compares positions in space.	1	2	3	4	5	Can describe and compare spatial positions in a variety of contexts.

STUDENT SURVEY
GRADE THREE

MATH CONCEPTS

Student's Name ______________________ Rated by: __________________

School and Grade ____________________ Date of Rating: ____________

Rate the child's current performance in the following areas related to math and math concepts by circling the appropriate number in each case. Number 5 is the highest rating and number 1 is the lowest. Circle number 3 if you believe the student's ability to be average on a particular skill.

Judge each specific skill separately. Try not to let your general impressions colour your rating.

ASSESSMENT OF PROBLEM SOLVING

1. **Perseverance**	Doesn't complete tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	Completes all tasks.
2. **Confidence**	Is anxious.	1	2	3	4	5	Is confident.
3. **Willingness**	Refuses new challenges.	1	2	3	4	5	Seeks new challenges.
4. **Breadth**	Works at a narrow range of problems using few skills and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	Works at a wide variety of problems using diverse skills and strategies.
5. **Creativity**	Imitates the solutions to problems provided by others.	1	2	3	4	5	Creates new problems for own enjoyment.

ARITHMETIC

6. **Directions**	Cannot follow multi-step directions.	1	2	3	4	5	Follows multi-step directions with ease.
7. **Expansion**	Cannot express a two-digit number in expanded form.	1	2	3	4	5	Can express a two- or more digit number in expanded form.
8. **Place values**	Cannot arrange 2 two-digit numbers in order.	1	2	3	4	5	Can arrange 2 or 3 three-digit numbers in order.
9. **Counting**	Cannot count by tens starting with 10.	1	2	3	4	5	Can count by tens starting at any number (e.g., 4, 14, 24).
10. **Addition and subtraction**	Cannot add or subtract 2 one-digit numbers, even with concrete materials.	1	2	3	4	5	Can add and subtract 2 three-digit numbers, where regrouping is necessary, without concrete materials.

11. **Multiplication & division: conceptual**	Multiplication and division considered unrelated concepts.	1	2	3	4	5	Multiplication and division understood as reciprocal activities.
12. **Multiplication**	Cannot multiply facts to 5x5, or a one-digit by 10.	1	2	3	4	5	Can multiply a one-digit by a one-digit number and by 10.
13. **Division**	Cannot divide facts to 25 ÷ 5.	1	2	3	4	5	Can divide multiples of 5, and understands concept of remainder.
14. **Word problems**	Cannot answer one-step word problems using addition or subtraction or multiplication or division.	1	2	3	4	5	Can answer one-step word problems using any operation.
15. **Fractions**	Cannot use concepts 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, and 1/10.	1	2	3	4	5	Applies concepts of 1/2, 1/3, 1/4, and 1/10 in a variety of contexts.
16. **Sequence of fractions**	Cannot arrange two fractions in order (of which is greater), using concrete materials.	1	2	3	4	5	Can arrange two fractions in order, without using concrete materials.
17. **Decimals**	Cannot associate one-place decimals (e.g., 0.1) with corresponding fractions, using illustrations.	1	2	3	4	5	Can associate one-place decimals with corresponding fractions without using illustrations.

MEASUREMENTS

18. **Attributes**	Does not use the appropriate vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5	Uses the appropriate vocabulary

for attributes (e.g., heavy, long, cold).						for attributes.
19. Estimating Does not accurately estimate the number of standard units for length, area, volume, mass.	1	2	3	4	5	Accurately estimates units in classroom and everyday activities.
20. Comparisons Uses comparative terms inappropriately or not at all	1	2	3	4	5	Employs comparative terms accurately in a variety of contexts.
21. Graphs Cannot construct or interpret a simple bar graph or pictograph.	1	2	3	4	5	Can construct and interpret bar graphs and pictographs.
22. Money Cannot read, write, or make change for amounts of money up to one dollar.	1	2	3	4	5	Can read, write, and make change for amounts up to $10.00.
23. Time Concept of time and duration is not related to telling time with the clock.	1	2	3	4	5	Understands relations among seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years.

GEOMETRY

24. Sorting Cannot classify objects or shapes and explain the rules.	1	2	3	4	5	Can classify objects by several criteria and explain the rules.
25. Special vocabulary Has not developed a vocabulary to describe and compare positions in space.	1	2	3	4	5	Can describe and compare spatial positions in a variety of contexts.

STUDENT SURVEY
GRADE FOUR

MATH CONCEPTS

Student's Name ______________________ Rated By __________

School and Grade ______________________ Date of Rating _____

Rate the current performance of the child in the following areas related to math and math concepts by circling the appropriate number in each case. Number 5 is the HIGHEST rating and number 1 is the LOWEST. The numbers 2 through 4 represent degrees between high and low. circle number 3 if you believe the student' ability to be average on a particular skill.

In rating each item, disregard your ratings for that pupil on every other items; try not to let general impressions colour you judgments about specific skills.

Assessment of Problem Solving

1. Perseverance- Student doesn't complete tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	Completes all tasks.
2. Confidence- Student is anxious.	1	2	3	4	5	Student is confident.
3. Willingness- Refuses new challenges.	1	2	3	4	5	Student seeks new challenges.
4. Breadth- Student works at a narrow range of problems using few skills and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	Student works at a wide variety variety of problems with diverse skills and strategies.
5. Creativity- Student imitates the solutions to problems provided by others.	1	2	3	4	5	Student is very competent at creating new problems for own enjoyment.

Arithmetic

6. Directions- Cannot follow multi-step directions.	1	2	3	4	5	Follows multi-step directions with ease.
7. Expansion- Cannot express whole numbers in expanded form.	1	2	3	4	5	Can express 5 digit numbers in expanded form.
8. Sequence- Cannot arrange one place decimals in order.	1	2	3	4	5	Can arrange two or more two place decimals in order.
9. Place values- Can arrange 2 or 3 two digit numbers in order.	1	2	3	4	5	Can arrange 2 or 3 five digit numbers in order.
10. Word Problems (+ -) - Cannot answer one-step word problems using addition or subtraction.	1	2	3	4	5	Can answer multiple-step word problems using addition and subtraction
11. Word Problems (x ÷/÷) Cannot answer one-step word problems using multiplication or division.	1	2	3	4	5	Can do multiple step word problems using multiplication and division.
12. Addition and subtraction- Cannot add or subtract two whole numbers of two digits.	1	2	3	4	5	Can add and subtract two whole numbers of up to four digits.
13. Multiplication- Can multiply a one digit number by a one digit number.	1	2	3	4	5	Can multiply a two digit number by a two digit number.
14. Division- Can divide a one digit number by a one digit number.	1	2	3	4	5	Can divide a two or three digit number by a one digit number (quotient less than 30).
15. Fractions- Cannot add or subtract fractions with like denominators.	1	2	3	4	5	Can both add and subtract fractions with like denominators.

Measurement

16. Attributes-	Does not use appropriate vocabulary for attributes (e.g. heavy, long, cold).	1	2	3	4	5	Uses appropriate vocabulary for attributes.
17. Estimating-	Lacks accuracy in estimating the number of standard units for length, area, volume, mass.	1	2	3	4	5	Accurately estimates units in classroom and everyday activities.
18. Comparisons-	Uses comparative terms inappropriately or not at all.	1	2	3	4	5	Employs comparative terms accurately in a variety of contexts.
19. Graphs-	Cannot construct or interpret graphs.	1	2	3	4	5	Can transform information from one form of graph to another.
20. Money-	Can read, write and make change for $ .25.	1	2	3	4	5	Can read write and make change for amounts up to $100.00.
21. Time-	Concept of time and duration is not related to telling time with the clock.	1	2	3	4	5	Understands relations among seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years.

Geometry

22. Sorting-	Cannot classify objects/shapes and explain the rules.	1	2	3	4	5	Can classify objects by several criteria and explain the rules.
23. Spatial vocabulary-	Has not developed a vocabulary which describes and compares positions and motion in space.	1	2	3	4	5	Can describe and compare spatial positions and motion in a variety of contexts.

STUDENT SURVEY
GRADE FIVE

MATH CONCEPTS

Student's Name ______________________ Rated by: __________________

School and Grade ____________________ Date of Rating: ____________

Rate the child's current performance in the following areas related to math and math concepts by circling the appropriate number in each case. Number 5 is the **highest** rating and number 1 is the **lowest**. Circle number 3 if you believe the student's ability to be average on a particular skill.

Judge each specific skill separately. Try not to let your general impressions colour your rating.

ASSESSMENT OF PROBLEM SOLVING

1. **Perseverance**	Doesn't complete tasks.	1	2	3	4	5	Completes all tasks.
2. **Confidence**	Is anxious.	1	2	3	4	5	Is confident.
3. **Willingness**	Refuses new challenges.	1	2	3	4	5	Seeks new challenges.
4. **Breadth**	Works at a narrow range of problems using few skills and strategies.	1	2	3	4	5	Works at a wide variety of problems using diverse skills and strategies.
5. **Creativity**	Imitates the solutions to problems provided by others.	1	2	3	4	5	Creates new problems for own enjoyment. enjoyment.

ARITHMETIC

6. **Directions**	Cannot follow multi-step directions.	1	2	3	4	5	Follows multi-step directions with ease.
7. **Expansion**	Cannot express whole numbers or fractions in expanded form.	1	2	3	4	5	Can express seven-digit numbers and fractions in expanded form.
8. **Place values**	Cannot arrange whole numbers of two digits in order.	1	2	3	4	5	Can arrange numbers from ten thousands to one-hundredths in order.
9. **Addition and subtraction**	Cannot add or subtract whole numbers.	1	2	3	4	5	Can add and subtract whole numbers as well as one or two-place decimals.
10. **Multiplication**	Cannot multiply one-digit numbers.	1	2	3	4	5	Can multiply a two-digit number by a three-digit number.
11. **Division**	Cannot divide by	1	2	3	4	5	Can do long division

one-digit number		by two-digit divisor.
12. Word Problems Cannot answer one or two-step word problems involving addition or subtraction or multiplication or division.	1 2 3 4 5	Can answer one and two-step word problems involving any operation.
13. Fractions and decimals Cannot identify equivalent fractions.	1 2 3 4 5	Can relate fractions to corresponding decimals.
14. Operations with fractions Cannot add or subtract fractions with like denominators.	1 2 3 4 5	Can add and subtract fractions in which one denominator is a multiple of the other.

MEASUREMENTS

15. Attributes Does not use appropriate vocabulary for attributes (e.g., heavy, long, cold).	1 2 3 4 5	Uses appropriate vocabulary for attributes.
16. Estimating Does not accurately estimate the number of standard units for length, area, volume, mass.	1 2 3 4 5	Accurately estimates units in classroom and everyday activities.
17. Graphs Cannot construct or interpret graphs.	1 2 3 4 5	Can transform information from one form of graph to another.

GEOMETRY

18. Geometric Schema Cannot classify plane shapes or geometrical solids.	1 2 3 4 5	Can classify and draw plane shapes and geometrical solids.
19. Congruence Cannot recognize	1 2 3 4 5	Can recognize and

congruent designs.		draw congruent designs.
20. **Spatial concepts** Cannot visualize objects from different perspectives (top, back, left, right, front, bottom).	1 2 3 4 5	Can visualize and draw objects from different perspectives.
21. **Angles** Does not understand the concept of a right angle.	1 2 3 4 5	Can compare other angles to a right angle in drawings and real-life objects.

June 1988

L1 Assessment Scoring Sheet

Name of student ____________________ Grade _____ Date ____________________
Assessed by ____________________

0=zero
1=minimal - halting
2=struggling
3=can get by
4=native-like control
5=superior for age

	0	1	2	3	4	5	Comments
Listening							
Speaking							
Reading							
Writing							

PORTUGUESE-CANADIAN CHILDREN IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: CASE STUDIES IN CLASS AND ETHNICITY

Ilda Januario

Introduction

In this paper a comparative analysis of a sample of elementary school children will be attempted by taking into consideration four variables: socio-economic status, ethnic background, gender, and academic progress and achievement. The children, who are students in two schools in the west end of Toronto, both within the jurisdiction of the Board of Education for the City of Toronto, are part of a larger sample in the Language and Learning Project that includes children from four ethnic backgrounds -- Portuguese, Chinese, Greek and Anglo-Canadian. The two ethnic groups of particular interest for this case-study are those of Portuguese- and Anglo-Canadian background.

The sources used for this analysis are the field researchers' notes and observations over the last two or three years (depending on how long the children stayed in those schools); the teachers' report cards (consultation of which was approved by the parents); math and oral language assessments, and class rankings made by the teachers at the researchers' request; writing, math and reading assessments made by project personnel based on test results and samples of the children's work; and interviews conducted by the field researchers with the children and their parents and teachers about topics related to literacy and achievement, work habits, social and family background and interaction, etc.

These sources were instrumental in determining the four variables that compose the axes of our analysis; however, other than gender, none of the other variables -- the ethnic and socio-economic background of the children and their progress and achievement -- is self-explanatory and must be defined at this point.

In spite of the L&L attempts at getting a balanced sample of children in terms of ethnolinguistic home background, the number of children in the two schools from homes where only English is spoken is smaller than that of children from the other linguistic backgrounds. As a result, when children were selected to represent this ethnolinguistic group, numbers had to be made up by children that officially speak only English in the home but who, in reality, speak other languages with their parents or grand-parents. Some of these students also attend or had attended Heritage language classes in that language. Such is the case with Lila and Mani, whose families are East-Indian and who are exposed to Telugu, Hindi and Gujarati. Then there are the children of mixed parentage, such as Jessica and Simone, who communicate with their parents in English but who have acquired a limited knowledge of Chinese or Portuguese in order to be able to communicate with their grand-parents. Three out of the four children mentioned are students in the first of the two schools; for in the sample from this school there are no children from English-speaking homes, in the sense that was originally intended in our research, this is, that the children should not have been exposed to a language other than English in the course of their daily life - other than a language learned in school as part of the regular curriculum, i.e. French. Originally there were more students from English-only backgrounds in our sample in both schools; however, several of them moved away and, although we attempted to replace them with students from the same linguistic background, this was not possible in the majority of cases. The reasons for the students moving out of the schools were normally related to moves to another area of the city for family reasons, parents' job transfer, preference for another city area; or, in some cases, because of the parents' perception of the school. But the high turnover in the student population was not limited to the Anglo families. Students from other ethnic backgrounds also change schools for similar reasons -- to live in the suburbs or, more rarely, to return to the parents' country of origin (i.e. Rui).

At the second school there are a few children from English-only homes but not as many as originally intended -- only one per grade instead of two. They are Benjamin, Jonathan and Samuel. But one must add, for the sake of clarity, that, to be from an English-only home does not exclude the possibility that the parents were immigrants. This is the case for Samuel and two other black project children (Janice and Martin) who moved out of the school and whose parents were born in the West Indies. Their extended families spoke, with the child or amongst themselves, a Caribbean dialect of English.

In so far as the classification of the socio-economic status (SES) of the families is concerned, the situation is even more complicated. For the purposes of this analysis, these backgrounds were assigned the designations Low, Intermediate, Medium and High SES, depending on the education and occupation of the parents, including that in the country of origin. In this way, the parents who have an elementary education or less, and who are manual labourers and hold unskilled jobs, are classified as "Low" SES. Those parents who have a secondary-school education or lower, and who work in clerical or skilled manual occupations, or a combination of both for the husband-wife team, were classified as "Intermediate". In those cases where parents have at least secondary education and work in occupations that demand mainly the deployment of mental skills, such as supervisory roles and the like, their SES was classified as "Medium"; finally those who hold university degrees and work in professional-type occupations, were classified as "High" SES. Of the 22 children from Poruguese and English-speaking backgrounds, 8 came from low, 4 from intermediate, 9 from medium SES, and 1 from high SES.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Finally, before getting into a discussion of the case studies, one must endeavour to define the notion of progress and achievement. For this, the teacher and project assessments, triangulated by the field-researchers' observations, must constitute the basis of our classification. The notion of achievement presupposes that the child's academic standing can be judged against a norm for the group, for example grade level. From this perspective, students were ranked at the end of each school year. Two such rankings were carried out: the first by the teachers with respect to the rest of the class, and the second by the researchers with respect to the age cohort within the sample studied. On the basis of these rankings the children were categorized as average or above or below average.

The notion of progress, on the other hand, implies that a student's final academic standing can only be judged by reference to his starting point, or, alternatively, to different points along the way.[1] As our research so clearly shows, the notion of progress is particularly poignant for our sample, as it is for schools of heavy multiethnic composition in general, because children who come from language backgrounds other than English and who often speak little or no English at kindergarten level, have further to go before they can "catch up", and this takes at least the lower primary years to do. In comparison to many Anglo children they may be considered "low achievers" even though, in reality, they may be "high progressers"; one suspects that SES tends to reinforce these distinctions, i.e. children from low SES backgrounds who do not speak English on entry to school may have more difficulty in catching up.

Curriculum guidelines and school staff also make the distinction between progress and achievement, often in the context of discussions of the contrast between "process-oriented" and "product-oriented" instruction. Teachers concur that process-oriented instruction is "in" as far as the latest philosophy behind the curriculum is concerned but, as one teacher put it, "when the crunch comes they want to see results, the product". The implications of this distinction and the practicses it engenders will be discussed below.

As far as achievement is concerned, whereas in most cases the teacher and the project assessments, supported by the observations, concur as to the child's overall academic standing, in some cases this is not so. For example, some children were judged to be average or above average by their teachers and ranked in the top third of the class, but the project staff found them to be below average for the cohort, i.e. when the project children in the same grade, across the four schools, were taken as the basis of comparison. This is the case for four children, the most ambiguous of whom is Jessica. Interestingly enough, the opposite case does not happen, that is to say when the child is judged to be average or below in class but is above average in the cohort. In the sample of 22 children, 11 are below average and 8 are above average. As can be seen, these results are also related to SES and ethnic background -- there are more Portuguese-Canadian children ranked below average whose families have a low SES, even taking into account that there are more Portuguese children in the sub-sample. The other pattern that emerges, albeit not so clearly as the previous one, is the correlation between academic standing and gender. More girls (6) than boys (3) are below average and a similar number are average (2 girls; 3 boys) and above average (4 boys; 3 girls); and this despite the fact that there are slightly more girls (12) than boys (10) in our sample. Given the small number of Portuguese and Anglo children involved in the two schools, this difference may not be statistically significant. For this reason, the dimension of gender will, of necessity, be the smaller component of this paper. However, whenever pertinent, it will be discussed in relation to our sample.

It should be noted, however, that SES or social class, like gender and ethnic background, although a predictor of achievement, is not its cause. This point will be developed later in our discussion. Other variables such as individual family situation, ability and emotional state (motivation and level of interest) contribute greatly to determine progress and achievement. By ability one should consider not only innate or developed intelligence but also specific abilities or likings which make a child naturally more interested or gifted in certain areas of the curriculum and which tend to be more or less valued in literacy terms. For example, teachers commonly distinguish, and this particularly in the lower grades, between children with well developed "small motor or large motor muscle co-ordination", the small motor development being more conducive to the early acquisition of literacy-related behaviour and activities.

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[1] It is important to remember, when comparing the two ethnolinguistic groups, that the children were not selected to give systematic representation to different levels of achievement. It is therefore not possible to draw any conclusions about the relative achievement of the two groups from a comparison of the ranks assigned to the students on any particular occasion. Warranted conclusions can be drawn, on the other hand, from comparisons made in terms of individual students' progress.

The Case Studies

In selecting the case studies, care was taken to ensure that the children would represent particular combinations of the variables under study - ethnic group, SES, and academic standing - so that they would be "representative" in some way; and so that they would illustrate issues found to be crucial in the course of this researcher's field work. I found the cases of Benjamin, Tomas and Cristovao in the lower grades to be of particular interest, as well as those of some of their class mates. Benjamin and Tomas attend the first of the two schools, which is ethnically very mixed. Cristovao is a student at the other school, where the predominant ethnic groups are of Portuguese and Chinese extraction.

We shall initiate the case studies with Benjamin, the Anglo project child, for he poses an interesting contrast with the Portuguese project children, Tomas and Jorge, in the same class.

Benjamin

Benjamin is a grade 2 student who has been in the project for two years. He is a good-looking boy, blond with blue eyes, brimming with vitality, but given to mood swings. One day he could be a hard-working and compliant student, the next a mischievous child. Having started in our project as an enthusiastic student, by the end of the two year period he had become despondent and was dissatisfied with school.

The Home Background

Benjamin's father holds a managerial type position in a banking institution and his mother (who emigrated from Scotland with her parents at 10 years of age) used to be an accountant before the birth of the couple's three boys. Since then she has been a home-maker but she does some part-time consultation work (one to three evenings a week). According to the criteria discussed earlier, this is a family from a Medium SES.

The mother has the main responsibility for the day-to-day school issues such as homework, field-trips, visits to the classroom, including doing some volonteer work. Given that Benjamin's older brother is in grade 5 and had difficulties with reading, the mother has learned a great deal about teaching how to read that she has used with the two younger boys. According to his mother, Benjamin knew the letters and numbers by the time he went to kindergarten and could write some of them. Mother has read a great deal to him ever since the pre-school years, material that entailed a lot of repetition. On entry to school, Benjamin could not read, as such, but could take a book and tell a story from looking at the pictures. His parents felt that "reading is the basis for everything" but the mother lamented that, as parents, they were not setting good examples for the children in terms of their own reading habits. Benjamin did more drawing than writing at home, although mother was always available as a spelling consultant. Mother said she did not believe in getting the children started in any particular area of learning unless the children asked for it or gave signs of being ready.

Other relatives and family friends, particularly female ones, have always taken a great deal of interest in the boys' progress and also "do a lot of work" with them, particulartly on weekends -- have them read out loud, play games with them, tell them stories and songs, teach them music. The parents order lots of books and magazines for the children. Benjamin also gets stimulated by his older brother's school work and activities and learns a great deal in the process. For example, according to his mother, Benjamin already understands the concept of multiplication from watching his brother work. While doing homework, the mother sits with the boys and is available for consultation at any time. Parents think that homework is fine after Grade One, one side benefit of it being that it gives parents an idea of what the curriculum is like. However, they are against too much of it and believe that it should be based on work not finished at school.

As far as educational goals and aspirations are concerned, Benjamin's parents hope that he will do the best he can; if he wants to be an artist, as it has been his wish, they agree, but would very much like him to attend university. In the short term, they hope he will get over last year's negativity about going to school.

The classroom situation

Kindergarten

As explained before, Benjamin was not a project child during his kindergarten years, although he was already a student in the school and had the same teacher as the other project children, the only difference being that he attended the afternoon classes. His mother, with the mothers of the other Anglo project children, was a frequent visitor to the class given that they were homemakers or had jobs with flexible hours. This group of Anglo mothers was on very friendly terms with the teacher and spent a considerable amount of time talking to her and helping in the classroom and on class outings. They were all articulate, had at least completed high-school and, in the teacher's judgement, "did all the right things" in terms of their children's education. In some ways, they were to be contrasted with many of the immigrant mothers, who had less time and ease with the teacher and within the classroom either because they worked long hours outside the home, spoke English haltingly or not at all, or both.

> "They [Anglo project parents] have the same philosophy about their children. You know, they are North-End parents -- they're interested, they're educated, they know what they want for their children. The children are indulged, bright, they're caring people [parents] (...) I have many more kids who don't speak English, they need more individual attention. I don't usually have kids like Jocelyn, Asher and even Jason (even though his background is not as caring and affluent). It's nice to see more professionals, it's more interesting, it's more challenging for me. It's nice to have the parents wanting to come in and getting involved."

Accordingly, the group of three or four Anglo children in the morning kindergarten class were a confident group of youngsters, very bright and articulate, clearly at ease in their surroundings. The fact that Benjamin was not part of the morning group did not greatly modify the situation. His mother knew the other two Anglo project mothers and was also part of this group. Like them, she participated in class activities, such as helping with snack and cutting up materials for art work.

Benjamin's school report from this teacher is fairly typical of the verbal and written comments that the teacher also made about the other Anglo children. In the "Pre-school File Sheet - Parent Interview", filled out when Benjamin was three and half years old, the teacher wrote the following comments -- "appeared at ease in the classroom", "talked confidently with adults", "talked with other children", "good picture development", "good small muscle control", "shows good concentration at self-chosen tasks", etc.

In the first report of 1985, at the end of the first school trimester of Benjamin's junior kindergarten year, the teacher noted that Benjamin was begining to read and that the association of sounds and letters in writing was also beginning to take place. By the end of the year, June 1985, the date of Benjamin's first formal report on file, he was judged to be doing well in all areas of the curriculum except that he still did not yet read simple words, neither did he write short sentences. However, he could identify and recite the alphabet and record it with some help. He could not as yet record number activities but could count to 28 and record numbers to 12. It is also written that Benjamin "expresses himself well in sentence form and enjoys sharing personal experiences".

In Senior Kindergarten, the teacher wrote in her comments that Benjamin "shows a keen interest in reading and likes to read pattern books to his classmates", "has acquired a small sight word vocabulary", "can sound out many of the words he uses in his writing, his dictated stories are lengthy and adventurous"; and "has a good understanding of math concepts at his level". By the end of the year, in June 1986, the teacher's additional comments alluded to the child's enjoyment of writing and his confident use of invented spelling in spite of many reversals with writing letters and numbers. In addition, he "speaks well and uses interesting vocabulary and always enjoys participating and sharing his ideas during group times". He could orally add and subtract well to and from 5 and "Benjamin's work habits are good. He concentrates well and completes what he starts". Given that Benjamin was not yet in our project, we have no verbatim comments made by the kindergarten teacher, or observation notes, about his beginning years.

Grades One and Two

In Grade One, the time at which Benjamin joined our project, he was considered to be "very good" in Environmental Studies, Math, Speaking, Writing and Reading, in that order. He seemed to "need improvement" in Handwriting Skills, Work Habits, Social and Emotional Growth and Listening. He was not "having difficulty" in any area. As for the teacher's comments, they are for the most part quite positive -- Benjamin took active part in discussions and expressed his ideas meaningfully; recognized and printed the letters of the alphabet; could read colour words and recognized most of those in the first book of the Nelson reading series and attempted to discover those words in other books while learning new ones; he was progressing at creative writing and was able to write one or two sentences to accompany his pictures; he applied phonetic knowledge to spell words and could read his own stories. In mathematics he could read and write numerals to 100 and do and write simple sums as well as understanding the concepts of more, less and equal. On the negative side, it is stated that sometimes he chose not to follow routines and instructions.

By the end of Grade One, the teacher's comments attest to the boy's steady progress. He was on the last reader of the series; he was able to use context as well as phonetic cues to read new words, to retell stories and read instructions as well as simple library books. He was beginning to extend his ideas and add detail to his stories. In math, he could solve problems involving facts to 10 and apply the concepts of addition and subtraction to larger two digit numbers. He was completing his "handwork" with care and only some letter reversals could still be seen in his printing. In using the researchers' SOLOM assessment, the Grade One teacher ranked most of Benjamin's oral language skills and math concepts with the highest scores except for "counting by units" and "fractions".

The researchers' observations can well attest to this child's rapid progress which, as the teacher remarked, was particularly dramatic during the second trimester of the year. In class, Benjamin showed some of the benefits of the attention he received at home in combination with those of a competent and experienced teacher in Grade One. In the two class observations, set six months apart, Benjamin makes the transition from purely invented to nearly intelligible spelling in the course of the story-writing period.

> Oct. 86
> T has distributed story-writing books. The Vice-Principal comes in with a Unicef box
> and explains its use. After he leaves, Ss start drawing the pictures for their stories.
>
> X draws a pumpkin, clouds and a witch. After that he writes, using invented spelling. X gets up to see the T and reads her his story "One day I seen a witch". T wants to know what the witch is doing or where she is going and X
> says "she's just being a picture". X comes back to his seat and writes some more. X gets up to see the T and reads her the story again. "I seen a witch/ she went to the store/ she bought worm soup". T says super and asks him to put in a little more. X sits down and draws some more. Meanwhile T, who has been conferencing with a group, asks to see a group of more advanced children in which X is included. T asks Ss to read their stories. Katerina reads her first. T asks her to show her picture and asks Ss, individually, what they like about it -- some say the pumpkin, other the ghost. T says she likes the way in which she told her story. X reads his story next and T also asks that he show the picture and what others liked about his story. Most say they liked the worm soup. T tells X that tomorrow he can make the story longer. X says he has not finished; he is going to write "she ate it and it was yucky". T asks the other Ss in the group to read theirs but the other three Ss only have drawings. T asks them to explain them.
>
> April 87
> [Teacher initiates a story-writing preparation period.]
> T asks Ss to sit in a circle. Once they've done so, T tells Ss that she didn't have a chance to read all the stories last night. T asks them to think about the story they want to write today. Judith tells the group about her story; gets up and picks up her story book from the round table by the carpet and sits at her desk to write. Other Ss do the same as soon as they tell T and class what their story is going to be.

When X's turn comes, he says he's going to write about him and his family going to the beach, influenced by Daniel's account of his story.
T asks him to find something different from Daniel's. T goes on to Johnny before coming back to Benjamin; T and X talk about his story.
T - [talks to another S]
Benjamin?
X - I'm going to have to make it like uhm-just my family went surfing and that's all? My family went surfing-
T - You need a little more than that part but. that's interesting that part but then maybe you could tell uh-
X - And then we made sculptures of uh- sand
T - Okay how did you make them?
X - We uh- took wa-a little bit of water
T - {Uhuh}
X - {And} a can and then we uh- we put it over there and then we uh- got some shells and stuff and we- for the eyes and stuff
T - Okay how did you make- how did you make the faces * for the sculpture face {what did you make}
X - {We uh-} we need the water to stick it together
T - Uhuh and then anything else did you use? Your hands or something else?
X - Yeah my hands and a bucket

T goes on to the next S. X goes to his desk with Daniel, who sits beside him. X says, somewhat sheepishly, that he's going to do the same as him, but just a little bit, the surfing part. Daniel pretends to be angry, calls him copy-catter. They sit and start to draw pictures for their stories. Later on, T passes by and X explains his picture. X gets up to show his story to the T. He reads it to her. "Once in the summer I went surfing/ my mom made a shark sculpture". He gets stuck on the word "sculpture". T asks him to write how she made the. X goes back to his seat and writes more. He gets up to see the T but she asks him to read his story to two other Ss. After having done so, he goes back to the T and reads the story again with the new sentence "my mom got water and padded it/ mom used shells". T asks him what did his mom pad. X explains that "it" was the sand to make the shark. X goes back to his desk and makes the necessary correction, "sand" instead of "it". He tells T he made the correction and T is satisfied. X moves on to the next activity, painting."

As one can see from these two observations, Benjamin showed great motivation and persistence in his work. It helped that, from the begining of the year, the teacher had introduced mechanisms in the writing period to encourage completion of work and development of story such as having an appreciative audience, instilling the sense of story, and going beyond the caption stage through individual conferencing. Six months later she added a couple of other devices to encourage the flow of topics, by doing preparation for the story and - to add novelty to the idea of audience - by reading to individual students instead of a group. Benjamin responded well to all these and thrived on the stimulation. He was very rarely a discipline problem, although he had his "difficult days" which the teacher controlled well.

In Grade Two the situation changed somewhat. The new teacher was inexperienced, particularly so in a setting where children from linguistic backgrounds other than

English constituted the vast majority of the classroom population. The teacher was impressed with Benjamin's abilities and had high expectations of him. He was often used as the resource person in the class and made to feel special. Given that this was a mixed Grade One/Two class and that most students were in Grade One (13 out of 20), and only 3 were native speakers of English, Benjamin seemed way ahead of most of his classmates.

The teacher's first report reflected this perception and Benjamin's report was very positive. All areas of the curriculum were rated "very good" with the exception of "Work Habits" and "Social and Emotional Growth". Additional comments stated that he was reading at a high grade level, with "insight and fluency" and was "becoming a confident author"; "he is doing well with grade two math". However she critized his attitude and inconsistency of effort. By the end of the year, other comments on the report were to the effect that his reading and writing were above grade level and that he had moved from the concrete to the abstract in most areas of the program, notwithstanding his low motivation and effort. According to the L&L's project assessment, Benjamin was found to be above average for his cohort and grade level in math, reading and writing.

The researchers' impressions of Benjamin in the classroom setting tended, in general, to confirm the observations made by both teachers, particularly the Grade One teacher. Benjamin was a very articulate child with a well-developed vocabulary. He took the initiative in asking questions and making comments during the appropriate activities -- show and tell, discussion time -- and recounted events well, often using the proper procedural forms (raising hand, etc.). During show and tell, there was no toy, movie or other children' activity that Benjamin was not familiar with from the home situation.

> May/87
> [It is Show and Tell time. Johnny G. is the leader and directs the activity from the T's chair but presently he wants to tell about going to his uncle's house to play video games. T asks him to stand up for questions.]
> John M. asks what games he is going to play. The boy answers "Ghostbusters", "Packman" and "King Kong Bundy". Grace asks something but he dismisses her question. T reiterates her question by asking him how he knows he's going. Benjamin has something to share -- he has 10 video games and names them and proceeds to explain one of them. T asks how they get scores and Benjamin explains about different levels of difficulty -- his mom is the best, he comes next and his father is last. Cheetram also explains a game and Benjamin says that's what he has. Katerina says her cousin has one of the games. Johnny G. also explains one of the games and Benjamin elaborates. A couple of Ss have hands up for questions. Cheetram gets picked first; Tomas asks if he needs a video. Benjamin explains how you "play them on TV". T says Ss don't understand. Benjamin explains further. T wonders if it works on the classroom TV or "do you need colour". Johnny comments and picks Cheetram for another question. Next, Tomas asks if he has a game about airplanes. Benjamin has two and picks Charles for the next question. Tomas asks "how do you shoot the bombs". Benjamin explains how it works with pedals. Other boys ask a few more questions until other Ss begin to lose interest and T dismisses Benjamin with "that was interesting", marking the end of the activity.

This episode shows Benjamin's great facility in controlling the floor with his answers and comments. It is obvious that he was the only child in the classroom who had a video game set at home; moreover, his mom and dad played with him. In November of the previous year, he had brought a small computer to the class for Show and Tell. Then, as in this episode, Tomas showed great fascination and curiosity about "how does it work", given that he himself had no access to such expensive toys.

In this respect Benjamin is similar to other Anglo students from middle SES backgrounds (i.e. Jocelyn), who seem to have a distinct advantage over most other students whose home language is not English and, in addition, whose parents are familiar with the gamut of children's toys, materials and activities available in the market. The Grade One teacher comments on the language advantage of Anglo students:

> "I would rather work with groups. And I think the children would too, because you have that much more participation, specially when you have many different levels or if you have some very verbal children and they take over. I find that if you have a class-type discussion, that the children who don't speak English well or hesitate over a word, the more verbal child like Benjamin or Louis [Anglo child] immediately supplies it and says: 'he means this or that' and the other child never has a chance."

For this reason, and given that these children also tend to do well in other areas, some teachers have high expectations of them and place them in high ability groups, which further reinforces their self-esteem. In fact, even at this early age, children know which are the best students and groups (and discuss this among themselves), even when the teachers seldom openly discuss the reasons for their groupings.

Benjamin was placed with the advanced ability group in Grade One (reflected to some extent in the seating arrangement) and, in Grade Two, in a special independent reading group and in the select and limited "spelling club". In both years he was quite advanced in reading compared to his peers but he was also doing very well in math and writing. However, in Grade Two he was still using his finger to help him with math computations, unlike Judith, another project child, as we will see later in another classroom episode.

Part of the problem in Grade Two (a mixed Grade One and Two) was the quality of the program, which tended to cater to the lowest common denominator in the class in terms of literacy. And this is not surprising, given that the majority of the students were in Grade One and were not able to read and write. One example of this was the class's reading program, which the teacher described as "risk-free" like her writing program. The teacher chose simple books to read to the class, books which involved a lot of repetition, such as those the reseacher had seen being used by the kindergarten teacher in the first year of the project. The students who could not yet read profited from this program but, for those who could already read quite fluently (5 out of 20, of whom 4 were in Grade Two), this arrangement was not satisfactory in this researcher's opinion and she discussed these concerns with the teacher. No additional reading instruction was given to them except that the two native speakers of English who could read -- Benjamin and Frank -- the individualized reading program. The teacher remarked that even the more "mature, language-wise" student like Benjamin enjoyed some of those simple repetitive books, which was only partly true, as these class episodes show.

> Dec./87
> T tells class they should get books for silent reading. T says she'll call groups to go to library centre -- calls on green and red group. X, who's in the green group with Frank, says he doesn't want to read. T tells him to read. He still doesn't want to but goes to the library centre grudgingly. T asks blue group to go. X comes back without a book. T orders him to get a book and asks the purple group to go as well. X goes and comes back with a picture book, appropriate for kindergarten. T asks him to sit at his desk; Tomas sits with him. X laughs for having had his revenge. Tomas throws him a tiny paper plane. X reads the single words which accompany the pictures to Tomas, laughing all the time. Both snicker. T sends him out of the class as punishment. A couple of minutes later, T asks class to put their books back before going out to recess. T makes sure I remove the mike from X. T has a talk to X on the corridor. X is being difficult. T and X go down together to the principal's office.

The researcher found out later that during that argument with the teacher, he told her that the books she had in her class "were stupid" (too easy), and that that was the reason why he didn't like to read any of them. His form of protest in the classroom was to get a beginner's book during the reading period and snicker with another class mate.

> May/88
> T shows book she's going to read, "Lady Bug", to class. X says they've heard that story before. T starts reading (...). Ss recite refrain of book but not X, who sits outside the cluster of Ss, with Frank, as if removing himself from the class. After several turns of repeating the refrain, T asks to hear only girls. X gets interested and moves back to the carpet with Frank. T reads on. T only wants to hear boys for the next turn. T says that the boys won (they were louder). T asks all Ss to recite together. Ss applaud. T shows next book she is going to read, "Red Is Best". Some Ss don't seem to like it (T has read it to class before). T reads book while showing pictures. At the end, some Ss applaud.

The reason why the teacher did not place the other children who could read in the individualized program (two of whom were project children whose first language is Chinese and the other two first language speakers of Portuguese) was explained to the researcher in this way:

> "Frank and Benjamin were on the individualized reading program but not Wei-Men and Judith simply because the program was animated and, to really enjoy it, you needed to have an abstract understanding of the language and of the world. And Wei-Men and Judith, although comprehension-wise are as far ahead as Frank and Benjamin, they are not at the abstract level to be able to enjoy the abstract sense of written language (...) Benjamin has a wonderful imagination because he has been exposed to wonderful literature. My expectations of the three [children] are very similar as far as learning to write and to read but Benjamin's imagination has been developed since he was a baby. I cannot take the responsibility that should be on the parents. Benjamin has his mother at home and that makes a big difference. Judith and Wei-Men's academic skills are probably as developed as Benjamin's but it is the underlying world experience that is missing; but it doesn't mean they are doing any worse."

In addition, the teacher explained that Benjamin and Frank came from types of homes where they were expected to take on the responsibility that would allow them to work on an individualized program, whereas the other Grade Two students came from more structured homes where they had not been able to develop that kind of decision-making process. For this reason, both boys were supposed to be on their own schedule for all the other types of activities, although they ended up wanting to work with the others. The teacher's perception of the students' home background was based on an interesting premise that the researcher was not, unfortunately, able to investigate. In practice, in the classroom, I was not able to recognize any differences in behaviour that would confirm these perceptions - perhaps because I was not present on occasions which provided this type of information. Moreover, Benjamin's mother contended that the reading program was not used very often and when it was, the two boys were left too much on their own.

Apart from this reading program, Benjamin sometimes got bored with the academic activities that were assigned, which, in general, made little distinction between the abilities of Grade One and Grade Two children. As the teacher told the researcher during the course of the end of year interview, she was more concerned with developmental level than with official grade placement and did not like to use the latter as a basis for program organization. The writing program was also a good example of this but it had the disadvantage that the time for writing was interrupted in the middle by by recess and it seemed too short for a considerable part of the year. Since they started by drawing a picture, the children who could write usually did not have time to get beyond the first sentence of their text. This may account for the return to the one-sentence text. The researchers and the child's mother agreed that Benjamin's writing had slid back, initially reverting to the one sentence, caption-like, stage of text which accompanies the picture (from a level C2 on the project's scheme for the descrition of writing development (see XXXX) at the end of Grade One to level B3 in the first trimester in Grade Two). It was not until the last trimester that he returned to the story-writing format and actually made good progress at this level (reaching level C6, the highest recorded for any child in the cohort), unlike the other project children. In fact writing stories had always been Benjamin's favorite activity in school because he likes "to use a pencil". Also, the teacher seemed not to show particular concern for his letter reversals even though she did so for another project child, Jorge, who was not doing well.

But there was more to it. Benjamin is a very self-confident child not very accepting of the teacher's authority, which he periodically put to the test (as the Grade One teacher was quick to notice). He would at times refuse to follow instructions or do a class chore because it was too much work; or make loud, disparaging comments about an activity or a child.

> Dec./87
> The T brings out a box of flash cards for the math activity. X says "Oh no, not that again!" and hides his head in his hands. T remarks ironically that he has been so pleasant lately. T asks Ss to make a circle on the carpet. Once they've done so, she shows a card with 8 + 3. T picks Rosie and Jorge to stand up alongside each other to see who can answer faster. Rosie does. Jorge sits and T asks X to stand up but he refuses. Frank doesn't want to take a turn either. T asks Martin, who stands up with Rosie but loses to her and sits again. T picks Anna P. X says: "Don't give her a hard one!". Anna loses and sits. Next goes Nicole. She is faster than Rosie but gives the wrong answer. Rocco goes next but also loses to Rosie. Wei-Men is right but the girl is faster. Shanti and Judith both lose to Rosie. T calls on Anna. X comments out loud: "She's never going to get it!"; but he is wrong. Anna takes over but loses to Trang and she to Senio. Hakeekat and Jorge lose to Senio, who is the one "travelling" now, as he moves around the circle. But he loses to X. T gives the more difficult cards to the most advanced Ss. X is the one "travelling"; he beats Martin, Cindy, Jesca, Anna, Nicole, Chris, Rocco. Wei-Men answers slightly faster but the T considers it a tie and the boys try again and it's a tie again. At the third time Wei-Men loses. T says they'll stop when somebody beats X. Nancy does, and the game stops. X says he's the champion but T remarks Rosie was also very good.

On one occasion, he even tried to do the "authority acid test" with the researcher. When I was interviewing his mother with a tape-recorder, Benjamin, his brother in law, got hold of a frying pan and a wooden spoon and walked around the room banging it with an enormous grin on his face until his mother insisted that he stop it.

Another contributory factor seemed to be that his mother was one of the rare parents who came to the Grade Two class on a regular basis to do some volunteer work, such as helping some of the children acquire reading skills, helping with purchases, etc., although she took no such role in Grade One, limiting her presence to field trips. All these factors seemed to give Benjamin an edge over his classmates and on occasion he was prone to becoming petulant and cheeky. During Grade Two he was often sent to the Principal's or Vice-Principal's office, a sign that the teacher felt powerless to control his behaviour in spite of the many notes that she sent home to his parents. Not only did Benjamin fail to receive sufficient stimulation from the activities he was set, but he also felt there was not enough competition from most of his peers, for Benjamin is a very competitive child. As certain classroom episodes showed, he did not like losing.

May/88
09:16
T gives instructions for the math period. She asks Ss to sit on the carpet or use the math centre except for those who are working on the math sheets at their desks. X takes a little box from the math centre with the label "Addition Flash Cards" and asks T's permission to go to the lunch hall. T says yes. Judith goes out with Benjamin and Frank. Once in the hall, Frank gets up on the radiator and holds up flash cards, one at a time, while Judith and Benjamin compete with each other to see how fast they can figure out the addition shown. There's some arguing because some cards are either upside down or covered by Frank's fingers. Whoever gets the answer first gets to keep that card. When both answer together, it is considered a tie and those cards are put at the back of the pack that Frank is holding.
09:26
Having finished the pack, Benjamin wants to count the cards to find out who has more cards. They sit on the radiator for this. Judith counts the cards aloud as both boys watch. Judith wins.
09:27
The group asks the RO [research officer] to hold an addition sheet with several rows of sums. I hold one for Judith and Frank holds another for Benjamin. Whoever gets through the sums faster wins. Benjamin uses his fingers, whereas Judith doesn't. Benjamin loses track of his sums and Judith wins again.
09:29
Group repeats first part of the game but this time with Judith holding the pack for Frank and Benjamin to compete against each other. When there is a tie, Benjamin tends to argue more who said it first. Benjamin is clearly ahead but he and Judith reassure Frank that "this is only a game".
09:34
Ss count cards to see who won though it is clear that Benjamin did. Judith proposes they do the addition sheet again. The two boys have a go at it while Judith and RO hold the cards for them. Benjamin uses his fingers a lot to help him with the calculations and so does Frank. Benjamin accuses Frank of not doing it in his head when he sees Frank do it. RO reminds Benjamin that he too was using his fingers. Frank wins.
09:37
Boys do same exercise to themselves while Judith watches them. Benjamin finishes first but Frank says he won before. Benjamin says that who wins last, wins the game, so he wins.
09:38
Judith gets up on the radiator and holds the cards for the boys. Benjamin ends up with more cards but gives the rest of the pack to Frank so that he can win this time. Judith accuses Benjamin of cheating and Frank counts his cards.
09:41
Judith and Frank compete for multiple sums. Benjamin tries to distract Judith by asking her an addition on another card but she does not lose her concentration. Ss finish at same time. Benjamin decides they turn the cards around and do it again. Judith finishes much before Frank who says she can't do it that fast. Benjamin wants a last round but Judith refuses.

> Benjamin does cards by himself while others wait. Benjamin goes back to class followed by Frank, leaving Judith to pack the cards. She complains that they are not helping.
> [Once in class, Judith initiates a game of "Picture Dominoes" with Frank. Benjamin joins them some time later and proposes they start all over again. The others consent and Benjamin takes the dominant role, deciding on who should take turns and Judith gets left out most of the time. She gets upset but does nothing about it.]

In both these episodes, Benjamin's strong competitive streak comes through in an aggressive way, although in the second one it is clear that Judith is stronger in math computations. His friendship with Frank softens his urge to win against him but he tries to have Judith lose to Frank; she is barely allowed to participate in the domino game that she herself initiated.

The teacher explained her problems with Benjamin as being due to the lack of motivation that comes with the absence of competition. But, as we have just seen, there were curriculum areas in which Benjamin did have some competition, such as math, with Judith.

> "Benjamin is hard to motivate this year because he knows that he can run in circles around a lot of them [other students] and he doesn't want to do anything. His mother is fed up with him too. I have told her that I've made the decision of putting Benjamin in a traditional class next year, [a class] which is product-oriented instead of process-oriented. My writing program is in process-oriented -- I don't care if they finish it as long as they are trying at what they are enjoying, what they are doing. He takes advantage of the fact that he knows, he becomes lazy. I mean, I could have my day full just with Tomas, Jorge and Benjamin, to keep the three of them on task...Benjamin is the most frustrating because he could do anything he wanted to do. He is like what I used to be, he knows how to fight the [school] system; you do what you have to do and then buzz off."

In addition, the teacher and the mother also invoke the home situation to explain some of Benjamin's unruly behaviour. His brother is prone to serious asthmatic attacks and has required a lot of mother's attention since he was little. In addition, and given that the older boy was "large muscle oriented", the mother has also had to spend more time in school activities with him than with Benjamin; and there is also a younger brother of kindergarten age. Thus, the unruly behaviour also seems to have a psychological component, based on sibling rivalry.

Social interaction patterns in the classroom also tended to reflect Benjamin's good standing in academic terms. In Grade One he tended to associate with Daniel, whom he considered to be his best friend and his favorite work partner. The teacher ranked Benjamin and Daniel as #3 and #4, respectively at the end of the year out of a class of 24. (This ranking of the class was done by the project teachers at the researchers' request). In fact, if one looks at the class ranking and compares it with the seating arrangement for the greater part of the year, the most advanced children were put together with certain exceptions (children with behaviour problems, like Louis or those with a tendency to communicate in L1, like Judith and Wei-Men). Because the top students in the class were girls, although they constituted a small minority of the class population (4 out of 24), they were close friends so that gender and friendship patterns were also a factor in determining seating arrangement. The reading ability groups emphasized this pattern. Benjamin sat beside Daniel. Conversely, Benjamin disliked Sergio the most in class. Sergio was a late arrival in class, spoke with a strong foreign accent and was behind the other students; he was ranked last by the teacher.

In Grade Two, the social interaction patterns were quite similar. Benjamin's best friend was Frank and they sat together at the same table group. Frank was a Grade One student but he had a reading and writing and computing ability far beyond his peers. He and Benjamin had been friends for a few years and their mothers were also good friends and looked after each other's children after school. Both mothers were native speakers of English and homemakers and both played an important role in their sons' schooling, namely through teaching them to read. However, Frank's mother only visited the class at the beginning of the year to help in the reading program. The teacher ranked Benjamin #1 and Frank #4 out of a class of 19. Benjamin thought that he and Frank were the best readers and writers in the class. The field researcher also noticed that other boys had high regard for Benjamin and this particularly during the course of the collaborative project in which the class had been divided into several research groups, each focusing on a particular animal. Benjamin and Frank were in the "cheetah group" and it was clear that other boys also wanted to be in it. But perhaps no other relationship was more telling in this respect than that which existed between Benjamin and Tomas, one of the two other project boys. Tomas seemed to derive inspiration for his work from Benjamin, often consulting him and showing his work to him but, being a repeater and not a very articulate child, Benjamin merely tolerated him.

> T asks Ss to pick up a book on an insect and do some drawing and writing about it. The books are located on a table by the carpet area standing up. Ss get up to get their books. X gets one on honeybees. T wants Ss to get a sheet of paper. X and Frank sit at their desks and talk while drawing. Tomas goes to the library to get more insect books. When he comes back, he shows X a book on "Insects" but the two boys continue to draw. X colours his picture and begins to write. Tomas tells T he cannot do his drawing (...)
> X asks T for another piece of paper; he waits and asks T about crayons. T points to book and says that beeswax is used to make crayons. Tomas, from his seat, says he knows what else comes from bees - wax; he gets up and looks at the bees book with X at his desk. X starts drawing again. T reads out of X's book. X colours; X resumes writing. Tomas waits around. When X finishes writing, he reads his text to T; she tells him to staple it. X waits for T to give him staple and while he staples his work, Tomas asks X to see his work. RO asks X to show her the book he used. Tomas follows RO and X to his desk and asks to borrow his book to use it for his project (...).
> X writes on his story-book. Chris comes to ask Frank to help him spell a word; Tomas asks X for spelling too but X tells him to ask Frank. Chris asks X for the spelling of "a boat" and Frank gives it to him. X and Frank sound out those words."

This observation shows how Tomas craved for Benjamin's attention and did not get it during work time. Benjamin was particularly productive during this unusually long writing period and his interaction with Frank was mostly on task. It was Frank who assumed the role of spelling consultant for the other children and it seemed to the observer that Benjamin was not interested in taking on this role.

According to the teacher, Benjamin also made some disparaging comments about Tomas.

She remarked on the tense nature of this relationship several times and made a point of placing both boys in separate classes the following year for she feared that Benjamin's attitude to Tomas would be a contributory factor in lowering the latter's self-esteem. This is not to say that tomas was the child that Benjamin most disliked in the class - a position which he reserved for "all the girls". In fact, Benjamin mentioned Tomas's name as one of his play partners and could be quite complimentary about Tomas's good turns, as in this episode during the play period.

> Nov.87
> X asks Rui and Tomas if he can join them doing the puzzle on the rug.
> He suggests they start all over, the others agree. X assumes
> leadership of the activity and does most of the talking. He says he is
> "mister expert at these things" and that he has this puzzle at home. When Rui
> and Tomas find pieces he praises them, telling Tomas at one point that he is
> "a genius".

Ideally, this case study of Benjamin would have been complemented by a case study of another Anglo child, but one from a working class background. Unfortunately, however, there was no such student in our sample, although there were students in this category in the classrooms where the researcher was an observer. One should not, therefore, generalize about the status of Anglo students in schools with a highly diversified ethnic population. One must also not forget that Benjamin's individual abilities are good, which has given him a great measure of self-esteem within the classroom and the home. He has done better academically than his older brother in the same school and his achievement is high within the school and the project's cohort. But, in the last year of the project, in Grade Two, his progress was not as pronounced as it had been in Grade One. The class composition was not such as to stimulate him to realise his full potential, and the teacher's program, deemed to be "process-oriented" and based on a "developmental" approach, seemed to be ill-suited to his needs. For, from the evidence that we have collected, Benjamin seemed to require a program with high academic expectations and a peer-group of students of the same academic standing as himself or higher. Fortunately, he was placed in such a class when he moved to Grade Three, and it can be expected that he will do well there, after some initial "catching up". Benjamin's boisterous self-confidence should not be seen as a liability, the roots of which are psychological and family-based (as his mother and the Grade Two teacher were inclined to believe), neither should it be considered to be solely a product of the classroom. However, for it to work to his advantage, he needs a classroom program and discipline that will channel such energy into a productive outcome.

Tomas

Tomas attends the same school as Benjamin and has been in our project since Senior Kindergarten. He is a tall, chubby child with soft brown eyes, light brown hair and round, pouting lips, all of which contribute to the impression of a friendly and open nature, which is borne out in contact. His most distinctive characteristic in class is his constant restlessness when doing pencil and paper work; but he is capable of great concentration during activities in the carpet area. After SK, Tomas moved up to Grade One (a straight grade class) but, on the recommendation of the Kindergarten and his Grade One teachers, he was made to repeat Grade One in a mixed Grade One/Two class.

Unlike Jorge, the other Portuguese project child who repeated Grade One, Tomas's status as repeater was at odds with his large build and emotional maturity.

The home background

Tomas's parents were born in mainland Portugal and came to Canada in their late teens, 12 years ago. They had completed their elementary education in Portugal and regret not having gone further ahead in their education. Instead, the father worked the land and the mother learned sewing. They got married in Canada and both have blue-collar jobs. Tomas's mother stopped working outside the home when he was born because her husband wanted her to stay home with the children until they entered school. She attributes Tomas's lagging progress in language development to his staying at home with mother without the benefit of other children's companionship. She contrasted his situation to that of Sandra, Tomas's sister, who being two years his junior benefited greatly from his company, and from that of other children minded by the mother.

Tomas's father works long hours as a carpenter in the construction industry. He relies entirely on his wife for matters related to his children's care and education but has an input on decisions and is kept informed about what is happening. Mrs Silva described him as the typical Portuguese man, who relegates all domestic matters to his wife. Although his English is better than hers given that he attended evening classes some years ago and she did not, having learned most of her English from the TV, it is the mother who goes for teacher interviews and other school activities. Sometimes she was accompanied by her sister in-law who lived with the family for a few years until her recent marriage. Tomas's aunt worked evenings, as a cleaner, and she minded the children during the day if the mother needed to go to school; she also gave Tomas some help with school work if he asked. Other than the interviews, Mrs Silva also attended the meetings of the parents' committee for about a year and a half but got tired of it. It seemed to her that they always discussed the same things and never reached any conclusion. She also participated in the school's weekly hot dog sale, a fund-raising activity.

For the last year, given that Sandra has started Grade One and is in school all day, the mother has again begun to work outside the home as a cleaning lady in private homes. The children can no longer come home for lunch (since the aunt has moved out); a baby-sitter who lives across from the school looks after the children during lunch hour and at other times when the mother has to start work earlier or finishes work later than than the school schedule.

A rather disturbing thing has happened since Sandra started Grade One. Being only one year behind Tomas, who is a repeater, Sandra has started to say uncomplimentary things about her brother and to correct both his English and Portuguese. The fact is that the daughter has always been seen, by her parents, as the smarter of the children. In my visits to the family, the mother invariably brought out the contrast in her children -- academic achievement, bilingualism, etc -- sometimes in front of them. The researcher suspects this rivalry may have been encouraged by the parents as a way to shame Tomas into improving his performance in school.

According to the mother, the father began to take a more active role in the children's education by occasionally doing oral computations with them at the dinner table or requesting that Tomas read to him in English. However, Tomas never mentioned his father's assistance with school-related work. The mother admitted that, because whatever help she gives is in Portuguese, she was reluctant to do anything much in the way of writing or reading, particularly during the kindergarten years. She was afraid of confusing Tomas with Portuguese spelling and reading, and this in spite of the teacher's advice that she should read to the child in Portuguese. Also, the kindergarten teacher was concerned that Tomas was being forced to do pencil and paper work, which she felt he was not prepared for until Grade One. Therefore, Tomas's exposure to reading and writing at home during the pre-school and kindergarten years was limited to oral instruction -- Portuguese stories, counting and naming of colours, etc -- and the Sesame Street programs in English on TV.

It was only in the first year of Grade One that the mother began to lose her reluctance to do reading and writing with Tomas in Portuguese at the urging of the Grade One teacher, who convinced her that the skills acquired in that language would transfer to English. Consequently, the mother made him copy short sentences in Portuguese (sometimes English) 10 to 20 times, on double-lined paper, just the way she was taught to do in Portugal. Tomas was often not enthusiastic about these sessions which took place before supper, but he did it under threat of losing TV and play privileges. It seemed that, in fact, Tomas tended to get punished fairly often in this manner, sometimes for not behaving in school. Some of the teachers told the researcher that Tomas also was physically punished. Once, when he showed up in school with a bruise on his forehead and told the teacher it happened as a result of a beating, the Grade One/Two teacher called the Catholic Family Services to investigate the situation at home. The parents were quite humiliated by this incident, claiming that the bruise had not been caused by a beating.

Tomas's lack of inclination for things academic also showed in other ways at home. His mother had to remind him to use the books he brought home from the school library. Sometimes he brought Portuguese story books for his mother to read. She took him to the public library occasionally, but only after he began to read, even though the teacher and Tomas had asked her to go before that time. Mother contrasted Tomas's performance in school with the precocity he exhibited in other areas of life -- particularly his interest in the opposite sex and in things sexual.

As far as the parents' aspirations for the children were concerned, they ardently hoped that both of them would go to university and avoid blue-collar work like their own. They would support them financially and morally all the way. Unfortunately, according to this mother, Tomas wants to go into the construction industry like his father and is particularly gifted and interested in activities involving mechanical skills. Only very recently has he told her of his wish to be a lawyer. When talking with the researcher, Tomas expressed the desire to be a lawyer, a car racer or a policeman. His desire to be a lawyer is somewhat at odds with his teachers' concern about his "garbled speech".

Bilingualism

Tomas began to participate in the after-school heritage language classes in his second year, in Grade One. Whereas up until that time the parents had been afraid that his English was not quite solid enough for him to attend any such classes, once he started he was sent to heritage four times a week or double the regular frequency. Tomas's spoken Portuguese was not fluent and he used a considerable number of English words, not unlike his parents' speech. It is not uncommon for working-class Portuguese immigrants to mix a number of words they know in English into their discourse as a way to show off their initiation into the English language (e.g. "troubles" instead of "dificuldades/problemas"); or as a way of referring to things or concepts that were not part of their life in Portugal (e.g. "morgage" instead of "hipoteca").

In spite of his lack of proficiency, Tomas was not afraid or reluctant to speak Portuguese; his comprehension was adequate. However, the heritage teacher observed that he had difficulties in expressing himself linguistically that she was convinced also carried over into English. He was at a loss when explaining "concepts", or retelling more complicated events or stories. When she asked him to attempt to explain or recount these in English, he experienced the same difficulty.

Tomas could not yet write or read Portuguese. According to the heritage teacher, he had trouble retaining what he was taught, needed a lot of repetition, and could not yet deduce or generalize, from the words that he was taught, how to sound out or spell other words. He also had "poor work habits". He tended to waste a lot of time if the teacher was not with him and had difficulty in understanding or following through with instructions. In this teacher's estimation, the parents were very demanding and this made the child nervous. He got spanked if he misbehaved or did not perform well; and they tended to disregard the fact the he was a "slow learner".

Tomas did not willingly attend the heritage language class, which was run by two teachers four times a week. However, once there he collaborated with the teacher and was a congenial child who tended to speak Portuguese in class, unlike some of the other children. However, suddenly in May, he stopped going to class altogether until the end of the school year. When the teacher investigated the reasons why, she was told by the mother that she did not agree with the fact that the classes were being taken up with the rehersal of Portuguese songs and dances for the June school concert. The teacher tried to explain, to no avail, that learning can and does take place by means other than desk work, but the mother was adamant, although she respected both heritage language teachers.

Given that the heritage program has not been integrated to school day at this school, the researcher could not attend the Portuguese classes. However, my impressions from talking to Tomas in Portuguese, both formally and informally, tend to confirm the information conveyed by the heritage language teacher. That is, he could "get by" in listening but "struggled" when speaking Portuguese and could not read or write in that language; that he had similar difficulties in English, namely, he was only beginning to learn to write and read. He tended to speak too quickly, did not articulate well, and made certain semantic confusions and word order inversions. In Portuguese, verb endings and word gender confusions were also common in his speech. He was at a loss to retell events or explain concepts, he was prone to waste a lot of time when not working on a one-to-one basis with an adult and had some difficulty in following through with instructions for this reason. I also suspect that he may have had trouble retaining information; however, I believe this was due to restleness and to a low level of interest and motivation rather than to a perceptual or short-term memory learning disability. But this was never proven in the course of the field work.

The classroom situation

Kindergarten

Tomas had the same kindergarten teacher as Benjamin, for both years. According to the teacher's reports, at the begining of the junior kindergarten year, Tomas needed small muscle development and "many oral language experiences", given that his English was minimal. The teacher emphasized the reading of Portuguese books but the mother did not follow through for the reasons previously explained. By the end of the year, the report indicated that Tomas "has made slow but steady progress in all areas of the program". Futhermore, "he has learned a great deal of English (...) Self-expression is still awkward. As yet, numbers and letters have little meaning for him. He is still at the labeling stage when dictating a story (...) He prefers the large muscle activities (...) He is easily distracted by peers".

The reports from senior kindergarten, the time at which Tomas became a project participant, both state that although "letters and numbers still hold little meaning for Tomas (...) he enjoys story-writing and accompanies his drawings with random letters. His dictated stories are in sentence form". The closing remark to the June report is that Tomas "will benefit from a four-year programme in the primary grades". In the end-of-year interview with the researchers, this teacher made other comments about Tomas.

> "He's a very happy little guy. He's very polite. He's not the leader type, ok? He's more of a follower type, but he is a very very nice boy with other children and with adults. He came in practically with only Portuguese and now anybody could understand him! It's gramatically incorrect, it's all jumbled up, but it's a giant improvement. He has taken a lot of criticism from some of the children a school because last year [JK] he really couldn't do anything. And the kids pick up on that (...) He couldn't hold a pencil, scisors, he wasn't allowed to do things [at home] last year. His mother says he's very destructive, he rips books, writes in them and she can't trust him with things like this. So we have a whole kind of cultural thing. She has to understand it: 'no wonder he can't, you won't let him do it!' She [mother] makes up a lot of excuses when I give concrete examples to work with, like she says: 'Oh we make him sit down with paper and pencil' and I'm going: 'Oh I really wish you didn't do that; when he sets the table for you, let him count things. Make sure everything is concrete for him. He cannot handle anything on the abstract level yet' (...) His mother's biggest complaint is that he comes home dirty or without a tie. Her priorities are totally wrong -- no water, no sandplay -- that is the biggest problem with the European parents.
>
> Intellectually, the work that I give, most of it he can't do. He really can't. He loves to do it but it has to be done on a one-to-one [basis]. We are not labeling him dummy, we're labeling him a slow-mover. He still needs to play -- which they [parents] hate to hear. He has a very difficult time staying on a topic, all right? His listening skills are rotten, he's not ready for that kind of [abstract] thinking yet. He doesn't see the any relationship between the pair and the number two. So with him I do, in mathematics, sorting, matching and classification. Right down to the JK's or basic math -- he can handle that. Maybe he doesn't have it [the ability]. It's very hard to tell with these kids. No small muscle business and no English, I don't know. He can't seem to retain what you are trying to get across, he doesn't learn in a teaching situation.
> (...) So my recommendation on his report card is that he will benefit from a four year primary program."

Certain episodes in the classroom attest to the fact that Tomas was not actively encouraged to write because of his lagging motor skill and intellectual maturation.

March 86
[The children have just participated in an Easter egg hunt and egg guessing game]. Presently the teacher shows a group how to decorate Easter eggs with magic markers. Tomas doesn't join the group and tells me he wants to do the Easter card on his way to the table. T calls another group to do their Easter cards at a different table. Tomas is among this group. These Ss are given a card with an egg-shaped hole cut out on the cover. Tomas asks T if he can make two cards, one for his parents, one for his He-Man. T says yes. TA (teacher assistant) asks him, Steven and Kathleen to sit at another table.
Tomas asks TA how to write "Dear Mom and Dad" but she tells him to colour the card first. Tomas colours while talking to Kathleen about what colour to use. He draws a face inside the hole and gets up to show the TA. She tells him to use more colour. He colours while standing up. He writes his name in the front of the card. When he finishes, he goes to the next table and waits for TA to write on other students'cards. On this table there is a large card with the words "Happy Easter" for those who want to try to copy the words but there's no such card at Tomas's table. Tomas goes to the T and asks her to write Mom and Dad but TA offers to do it. Tomas goes to her table and she writes "Happy Easter" in front of the card and "Dear Mom and Dad, Love" inside and asks Tomas to sign his name."

May 86
[Class has just had Show and Tell. X has been playing with Asher's transformer, the toy the latter brought for the activity].
T asks Ss to put objects brought by students on the Show and Tell table. X places Asher's transformer there. Ss are told to sit in the carpet area. T kneels on the floor and shows Ss a card with the word "Mum". T asks for other names for mum and says she'll put the card on the cut and paste table. T shows wall-hanging made of jute which all Ss are supposed to work on today, as well as the different bits and pieces which can be glued on to the jute for decoration -- string, pulses, buttons, felt bits. T demonstrates how to make letters and flowers with them. After this she selects a group of 6 Ss, including some of the most advanced ones, to sit at the cut and paste table. X gets the transformers from the Show and Tell table and plays alone with them on the carpet for a long time. Other Ss attempt to play with him but he discourages them.
[Fourty minutes later]
X takes his place at the cut and paste table with three girls. Ss work on their wall hangings on their own. He talks to RO while he works. He makes a flower. Shows it to the RO and the TA. TA tells him to use more glue. X applies some more glue, washes his hands and goes out into the hall to join the group of boys playing with Asher's transformers.

In both these observations we note how towards the end of the senior year, Tomas has not been actively steered to writing except for "signing" his name. In the first piece he was eager to do so but it seemed that he was expected to draw and colour rather than to attempt to write letters by himself. The same thing happened in the second episode, where Tomas and his peers at the cut and paste table did not seem to be expected to include the word "Mum" in their hanging, unlike the most advanced students. Moreover, Tomas has a competing interest on this day -- Asher's coveted transformers, which had previously absorbed his concentration for nearly an hour. We can say that both these combined forces -- Tomas's love of play (particularly with construction-type toys) and teacher's perception of his inability to do academic-type work on his own -- seemed to work together to militate against Tomas beginning systematically to acquire literacy skills in SK, however rudimentary and understated these skills may be in the program. In fact, the teacher told the researcher, on a number of occasions, that she found herself having to clarify for the parents the role of the kindergarten program in the children's lives. It is the place where they learn the appropriate social and work skills to get started on the "real" academic work in Grade One. Yet, when referring to senior kindergarten work, she hinted at the desirability of getting started on academic skills, even before Grade One.

> "I have a smart kid like Jocelyn and all those [Anglo] kids. This is really Grade One work [they are doing] in many ways and they need it. If I don't give it to them, they drive * * for this kind of stuff. They're not interested in doing it in a play way. This to them is school. I worry about Jocelyn because she doesn't have competition. She needs a couple of kids to challenge her. She can do everything better than anybody in the room; she is a very sloppy kid, she doesn't always finish what she starts and she basically has her hands down on every kid in the room -- intellectually, emotionally, and socially. I talk to her mother about that : 'If you don't think Jocelyn is going to get any challenge in here may be you should consider moving her'.
>
> I shouldn't be saying things like that but I can't spend any more time than I do already (...) I let her do it [SK work] last year; first she could do it and it would break her heart if I hadn't [let her]. Now I call it Grade One work for her. It's very important for her that she's better and further ahead (...) Jocelyn broke through with her writing last year because she spent time exclusively with senior kids and because of that she would hear everything I would be talking to them about. She understood the * of writing, that stories are wonderful (...). I'm really glad to see her and Asher [Anglo project child] get together because the two of them will egg each other on. Jocelyn and Asher, I can't really separate them, they're both very bright kids. I think in the long run, Asher [will excel] because he is more methodical and orderly. I'd put Judith next [Chinese-speaking project child], then Carlos [Portuguese-speaking project child]. I'd put Wei-Men [Chinese-speaking] in front of Carlos in terms of being smart, except he never talks. Carlos has so many strengths but he doesn't have them in the part that is going to start to count. Tomas goes last."

The teacher's discourse indicates that, notwithstanding the kindergarten program philosophy, academic ability and knowledge are highly valued at this stage. Tomas did not have much of either because he was seen to be lacking in the abstract thinking skills and the small motor skills required to do more academic-type work, in spite of his obvious interest in it. He told the researcher that what he liked best in school was "making storybooks". What would happen if he had been more "advanced"? One can only speculate. Yet, if one looks at the case of the other Portuguese-speaking project child in this class, Carlos, who exhibited these valued strengths, he still did not seem to measure up, in terms of achievement, to the native speakers of English in his class.

In terms of temperament, Carlos and Tomas were very different. Carlos was definitely the "leader type", who liked to take the initiative and control of play group activities. For this reason, he was often locking horns with Asher, another strong-willed boy. Carlos's mother had had somewhat more formal education than Tomas's (8 years) and held a white collar job (keypunch operator). His father, who spent most of his time in the evenings with the children, had 4 years elementary school and held a blue-collar job (car workshop). Unfortunately, Carlos's parents moved him to catholic school atthe end of the year, putting an end to his participation in our project. Their reasons for this were -- better discipline and better social skills transmitted by teachers (proper attire, respect toward adults, and the like) rather than strictly pedagogical reasons.

> "Carlos is like Tomas in that he's not crazy about academics, except he's got small muscle control. He also spoke very little English last year. His English is a lot better than Tomas's. It's garbled, it's awkward, but he has a wider vocabulary base.
> You have to pursue him [to do academic work]; but he's the most creative on paper of any child. He's a terrific pretend writer, what I call the invented spelling. He'll bring me pages of invented spelling from home and he'll point and read. He's such a prolific writer, he's on his second story book, he's one of the few kids (...) he writes almost everyday. He's not one of the children you have to tell him to go write.
>
> Even though he is not what I would call a smart kid, he's got all the right attitudes about school -- the enthusiasm, the hard work he puts into it, he completes what he starts. I think he'll be a very good writer once he starts. He needs much instruction, it has to be very structured for him. He will have a difficult time with academics next year. He likes to do it but it doesn't come easy to him. He can sing the alphabet, he's begining to recognize some of the letters. He should be a lot further ahead for the strengh he has in other areas. The way he talks, he loves to have books read to him, with all his writing but it comes very, very slowly. He can count to about 20 but again, you start juggling numbers around and it has no meaning to him. He's pretty good to five, whereas last year it had no meaning to him at all. I think he'll learn to compensate but he is no bright light. He's very good at problem-solving, he always comes up with an answer. But he is usually not the one who will have a suggestion that can be used and it's legitimate. He's quick...he's very determinate, but he's not going to sit down and write up the alphabet and that's what he's going to be judged on."

This ambivalent perception of Carlos seems to hinge on the following traits. One had to pursue him to do academic work yet he wrote almost everyday in class and at home, and he did not have to be told to write. He was not smart yet he was the most creative child on paper and was very good at problem-solving. He would have a difficult time with academics the following year yet he would be a very good writer; he had all the right attitudes about school and completed what he started. He loved to have books read to him, could count to 20, understand the abstract relations in numbers up to 5, sing the alphabet and recognize some of the letters. Yet he should be a lot further ahead in kindergarten -- write down the alphabet, "juggle" many more numbers, and so on. Again, we see a stated emphasis on the early acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills that transcends mere preparation for what is to come.

But where are the children supposed to get additional instruction in a kindergarten setting? Jocelyn "broke into her writing" in JK undoubtedly because she attended private day-care after school, where she received a great deal of curricular instruction, on the teacher's admission. In addition, she was already doing SK work in her JK year. As for Asher, ranked first in this classroom, our project writing assessment showed him to be the lowest (level A1), even somewhat lower than Tomas (A3), at the end of the year. They were both at the stage where few, if any, letters could be recognized in their "stories". In Asher's June report card, the teacher wrote that he used invented spelling to write, and that he dictated his stories; otherwise no comments were made about his writing. Jocelyn and Carlos (ranked #2 and #8 respectively) finished the year at the next stage of writing development (level B), the level at which groups of recognizable letters were stringed in word-like groups as labels to their stories. Jocelyn was already at this stage at the beginning of the year for the reasons explained before. In all cases, texts needed to be dictated in order to get the story down on paper that the student had in mind to write.

Carlos was allowed to participate in literacy episodes which were reserved for the five most advanced students but from which Tomas was excluded, although this did not prevent Tomas from making gains in writing, as we saw (from A1 to A3). However, the evaluation of Carlos's work and the way his verbal initiatives, particularly in a class situation, were received, was very different from that dispensed to Asher and Jocelyn. Often he was ignored because he shouted his answers instead of raising his hand - part of the problem the teacher labeled bad social skills. (As we will see later on, Tomas was also perceived to have the same social awkwardness in and out of the class situation.) The evaluation of Carlos's written work effort also tended to be ambivalent.

> March 86
> [The group of advanced students has completed the colour books, which involved some reading and writing with the teacher, in addition to drawing and colouring. The rest of the class did their stories, this time on the dinosaur theme, which they dictated to the teacher assistant. Over an hour later, during the story-telling activity on the carpet, the teacher asks both group of students to read their work in front of the class.]
>
> T asks Vivien to read her dinosaur story but she doesn't want to and T does it for her. Carlos wants to see the bird in the illustration and T shows it. Next, T reads John's dinosaur story and Watun's. She praises the latter for drawing his dinosaur rather than using a dinosaur stamp; Steven's story is read last. The more advanced students are invited to read their books. Frankie "reads" his "Blue is Best" story while teacher turns the pages. Carlos shouts to T: "What are you going to give me?"; he comments to another student that the teacher didn't give him a sticker but he did a lot of good work. Jocelyn reads next. Carlos asks T what noise they are hearing but she doesn't attend. Carlos is not attentive. T calls him next. He wants to take his toy dinosaur but T tells him to put it on the Show and Tell table. He reads his "Brown is Best" story. After he has done so, T calls him "lazy Carlos" because he did not finish his writing. Next, T reads Judith's story, saying only, at the end, that she must finish it. Carlos says he's going to finish his but T doesn't seem to hear. Asher goes next. T compliments him, although he did not finish his writing.

The unequal reception accorded to Carlos as opposed to Asher and Judith for a similar amount of work seems to be based on overall academic standing and expectations rather than strictly on the task at hand. If one examines the teacher's rankings of individual students at the end of the year, Asher and Jocelyn were marked #1 and #2 respectively in the class list. Carlos and Tomas, on the other hand, were ranked #8 and #9 out of 12 SK students. This class was a mixed JK/SK; there were also 12 JK children. Carlos's ranking seems to be rather at odds with his inclusion in the group of the five most advanced students in literacy episodes. His perceived weakness in math and in spoken language must have been contributory factors. But, in the end, the spoken language did not seem to be a major factor, given that Wei-Men, the Chinese-speaking project boy, who never talked and was not fluent in SK, but who was perceived by the teacher to be "smarter" than Carlos, was ranked #7.

But let us now turn our attention to Tomas once more, as he goes up to the next grade.

Grade One

In Grade One, all of his teacher's reports also attest to Tomas's progress but by March she was already recommending that he repeat the grade. By that time he was just starting on the pre-primer in reading and beginning to print words to go with his pictures. By June, he was reading in the second preprimer but he was only "begining to relate the story he tells about a book to the actual print". "He dictates interesting detailed stories about his pictures" and "is able to print the first letters of some words independently"; but "he does not consistently relate specific letters to specific sounds" and letter formation was difficult for him. Although he could read and write numerals from 1-10 and solve problems involving addition and subtraction when he used blocks, he still had difficulty in recording the answers.

In my interview with this teacher, she acknowleged that "Tomas had really jumped" but, due to insufficient time, she had great difficulty working with children on a one-to-one basis, which, in her opinion, was what Tomas greatly needed at this time. Tomas asked her to move his desk so that he could work by himself and cut down on the number of distractions but, even after that change had been made, his ability to stay on task remained weak. The teacher also said that when he attempted to read, he still relied heavily on pictures. Otherwise she had very little in the way of negative comments to make about Tomas -- either about his speech or his writing.

Although the researchers were not in agreement about the advisability of Tomas being retained, the matter was not raised with the teacher or school staff, since the parents concurred with the teacher's decision, which had also been fuelled by the kindergarten teacher's recommendations. However, the Grade One teacher pointed out that the retention did not necessarily have to take place in Grade One but could be postponed until the following year. This Grade One class had at least a couple of Grade One repeaters -- a Portuguese-speaking boy and an Anglo black boy.

As can be seen from the following class episode, Tomas's desk work was very much in contrast with his behaviour during story reading and preparation for the desk work, both activities involving the teacher and the whole class. When working individually, not only did he spend much of his time attending to his work group peers, but he also often got up to pursue the teacher.

Jan/87
01:06
T is on the carpet reading a story to Ss. X sits at T's feet. The book is called "Dinosaurs". After reading, T asks questions that Jocelyn and Benjamin know how to answer. T asks if the part she just read could really happen. X says no and Ss discuss this. X asks a question. T shows pictures from book. Later, T reads another book "Danny and the Dinosaurs". X and other Ss are engrossed. T sometimes asks questions about what she's reading. When the story-reading activity finishes, T asks Ss about having a dinosaur for a pet. Ss answer at the same time. T lets them talk, doesn't ask for turn-taking. T gets up and sits on the carpet, on the opposite side. Ss turn around to face her. T wants Ss to draw a dinosaur and the place they would keep it if they had it as a pet. Ss sit at their desks and T gives out yellow sheets of paper. Once he gets it, X gets up and picks up a plastic dinosaur from a box on a counter close to his seat. All Ss have picked one but X takes a considerable time to do this. T helps him choose and goes away. Soon after, X follows T to the supply room. She directs him to the books on dinosaurs. T gives him a book and goes away. Saying he wishes dinosaurs were real, X sits but gets up again to play with Charles' dino. T comes to his desk group and tells Ss to get started; tells X to decide and keep just one dinosaur to do his work. X sits down again and starts to trace his dinosaur. X says it smells like strawberries and calls T's attention to this; sits and continues to trace. T comes to his desk group to talk to another S but X stands up to show her his work. T asks him what colour it is going to be and he says brown. He draws and talks to peer; shows drawing to T again but she wants him to finish it and colour it. X sits and continues to draw, all the while interrupting this activity with conversation with his desk group peers. X gets up to show drawing to T again; she wants to see it coloured. X sits again and plays with his dinosaur. Consults the book "Dinosaurs!" to look for picture. A minute later he puts the book back. X talks to peers and attends to conversation between researcher and T, between peers. X gets another dinosaur from the counter and resumes his drawing.

> 02:00
> X begins to colour his drawing. All Ss in his desk group are playing on the carpet except for X and another boy. The T turns off lights to tell Ss to prepare for library period after recess [02:30] by getting their library cards. T turns lights on again. X, who has been colouring, gets up to talk to T. He wants to draw a pterodactyl. T looks for the picture in a book and asks him questions about his drawing. T is interrupted by another S, and X follows her to the supply room. Afterwards both sit together to look for the picture of a a pterodactyl in a book. X is very interested, but the T interrupts the activity to attend to other Ss. X follows her around and attends to what she does. Seeing that she is collecting the library cards, he gets his library book ready and does other things while Ss to clean up before going for recess.
> [In the library, after story-reading period by the librarian, in which Tomas is extremely attentive in contrast to Benjamin, the class looks for books on dinosaurs to take back to class. He looks for a book unsuccessfully. An older boy offers him a big book and X is delighted to find out there is a picture of a pterodactyl in it. X lines up to go to class. There his mother waits to take him home.]

From what these abbreviated class notes show, it was often a tedious business following Tomas around while he was engaged in some activity. The number of self-initiated interruptions was staggering and his dependency on the teacher for advice and support was such that he often lost interest in what he was doing if she had to attend to other students. He was, however, extremely fascinated by dinosaurs and was eager to learn more. In spite of the teacher's support all along, he still ended up the afternoon without a text about a dinosaur and restarted the drawing the next day, having found the picture of a pterodactyl. This restlessness was in stark contrast to his concentration during both story reading periods.

Another observation from later in the year, also involving drawing and the writing of a text, but where the research officer took a more active role with the project child, provides an interesting comparison from the point of view of Tomas's most problematic area -- his ability to stay on task.

> May 87
> [Class has been doing story-writing since 09:30. Whereas Judith and Wei-Men get started on their drawings immediately, Tomas does several other things at his desk and only gets started at 09:51. Even then, he gets diverted from this task by attending to conversations between classmates in his desk-group or between them and the T. In between, he draws and colours an airplane. T tells him to work a couple of times and enquires about his drawing once. Bell rings for recess. After recess, X sits again with his desk group.]
> 10:32
> T works with a group on the carpet. She asks X to come to the carpet because he was talking instead of writing. X comes to the carpet with his story book and lies belly down and rehearses his first line out loud; he gets up to sharpnen his pencil. He comes back and starts writing "One day I". He rehearses his line out loud.

X asks RO for the spelling of "went". Another S gives him the spelling and X writes the word letter by letter; he tells S he doesn't know what a "T" looks like. The other S explains. X gets up to sharpnen his pencil. When he comes back, he asks Judith, who's waiting to see the T, to read her story to him. She does so while Wei-Men makes funny comments about it and X stops attending to them. T calls Tomas to show her his work so far. He gets up to do so. T points out that he has been writing upside down on his notebook. Tomas goes back to his spot on the carpet and starts to copy line to top of page. He gets distracted in the middle but T calls him back to task. X gets up to ask T for the spelling of "airport". X lingers briefly before going to his spot on the carpet; attends to Benjamin reading his completed story to the vice-principal, who came in to give the T some papers. After talking to the adult, T asks X to get a paper from his desk and writes "airport" on it. He goes back to his spot, copies the word; sounds out and writes "a man".

Then he tries to figure out how to spell "said". X asks RO but she is not sure whether he wants "sad" or "said". Rather than waiting for an answer, X gets up and goes to nearby shelf to get the activity reading book, opens it on a certain page and finds the word "said" without hesitation. RO asks him how he know how to look and he says: "I done it tomorrow" [meaning yesterday]. Then he asks RO how to spell "If"; she asks him to sound it out, which he does well. But he only writes "F". RO corrects him. After adding an "I", X gets up to consult T. He waits for her, she is working with a group. When she is ready to see him, he asks her for the spelling of "wanted". She asks him to sound it out. He does it by emphasizing the final sound and suggests "D" [as the first letter]. T sounds out the first syllable, to help him identify the first letter. He comes up with "G" but gets "W" on the second attempt. T writes down the word for him on a piece of paper. X goes back to his spot on the carpet and talks off task to another S. Then he copies the word written by the T. He rereads his story and asks RO how to spell "with" but it sounds like "would" and she gives him the wrong spelling orally. But when he gives her the rest of the sentence, it becomes clear that he means "with him". She writes down that word and he copies it. He gets up to go to the bathroom. When he comes back, he asks the T if she's going to call the blue [reading] group. She tells him to finish his story. He goes back to his place and asks the RO how to spell "him". She sounds it out and asks him which letter comes first. He says "M". RO spells the word orally and he writes it down letter by letter. He announces it's the end of the story. He asks the T if he can read the story to the vice-principal as he had seen Benjamin do half an hour ago. T wants to hear it first. He reads it to her "One day I went to the/ airport a man said if/ I wanted to go with him". Tomas says it's him in the airplane. T asks him a question about the picture but Tomas ignores it and asks again if he can show the story to the vice-principal or the kindergarten T. T says not right now and asks him to get his library book.
11:13
X reads his library book to T.

Indeed, Tomas's progress - which the teacher had not neglected to mention in the June report - seemed very real to the field researchers. The project's writing assessment showed a quantitative leap from non-intelligible writing in SK (level A3) to writing of intelligible words and phrases used in labeling a picture (level B2), although, as the teacher remarked, Tomas's story telling remained in the oral realm. From this classroom episode, one can see that his restless behaviour seemed to have improved a fair amount, provided that he was isolated from his desk group peers and allowed to work in close proximity to an adult. An analysis of this text shows that Tomas still got side-tracked somewhat and got up often to see the teacher; and probably a great deal more, had the research officer [RO] not been taking notes by his side. He asked for the spelling of nearly every word but, when an adult sounded it out for him, he could usually "hear" only the end consonant. With much prodding, he could sometimes also hear the first consonant but, in the end, the word had to be written down for him to copy. He also made some phonemic and semantic confusions which could mislead the adult conferencing with him, e.g. "would" instead of "with"; "tomorrow" instead of "yesterday". The text he produced is not a story yet, but it does stand by itself without the picture. He also told the researcher, in the course of the yearly interview, that the most difficult thing in school was to make a story longer; and that sometimes he "sneaks" a story that he did at home to the classroom and just copied it into his storybook. Generally, he preferred the teacher to select the writing topic. In spite of these limitations, the researcher found this writing session to be fairly satisfying, both at the time and later, in comparison to what would follow in the third year of the project. Firstly, this teacher did not allow Tomas to stay in his desk group for the writing of the story after having witnessed the array of distractions he got himself involved with during the first part of the writing period, before recess. Tomas himself was quick to admit to the researcher that he was better off when working on his own. Secondly, Tomas did concentrate for a substantial period of time and produced a fair sized text of about four lines of writing, which he would rarely attempt again during the next year.

One wonders, of course, whether he retained the knowledge he acquired for future reference - as the heritage language teacher remarked; but somehow, as an observer, one felt that Tomas was on the right track to acquiring literacy behaviour. Tomas's progress was, by the end of the year, more evident than his achievement and, in the end, it was the low achievement that tipped the scales against his making the grade. However, the teacher told Tomas's mother that placing him in a mixed Grade One/Two class the following year would facilitate his passing in to Grade Two in mid-year, provided he continued to progress at the same rate. All in all, Grade One was not an easy one for Tomas, as the SK teacher had predicted. He complained to the researcher that he did not like math much and that he missed kindergarten, because there "they play"; his favorite activities were still doing puzzles and sonos. He indicated that he had problems with friends and social interaction -- "kids call me names, like fat". Ironically, and like Benjamin, the student he disliked the most was Sergio "because of the way he talks". As we saw before, Sergio was a newcomer to Canada and to the English language. But still, Tomas did not complain about school and was never considered a discipline problem.

In the Grade One/Two class the following year, the teacher's reports also attest to Tomas's progress, particularly in the last trimester of school and particularly in reading; but he was never promoted to Grade Two. By the end of the year he was still reading below grade level, according to the teacher, a fact supported by the project assessment. In writing, it was in his printing that the teacher saw an improvement rather than in his spelling, which remained invented for the most part. In fact, our project writing assessment noticed no improvement since the end of the previous year; and, in Tomas's opinion, the most difficult thing in school was story-writing and reading.

In math, he was said to be working "towards the abstract with his number facts". Our project also found him to be below his cohort in math, as it had in reading. The teacher felt that math was one of the areas where improvement was significant and, towards the end of the year, he was able to do some Grade Two work. Both teacher's reports indicated that he had the potential to do better, if only he were not so easily distracted, would stay on task and could "motivate himself".

It is interesting that for both Tomas and Benjamin, as far apart as they found themselves on the achievement scale, it was the motivation factor that was interfering with the development of their potential in this class. The fact that both were seen as behaviour problem students (especially Benjamin) probably had some relation to their lack of motivation. Tomas, for example, was sent to the vice-principal for having painted the washroom walls with the help of a younger class mate. The parents were not happy with the vice-principal's indictment of Tomas as the responsible party but, at the same time, promised to punish him by withholding Christmas presents a month down the line, a decision that the teacher hoped to reverse. Tomas's mother told the researcher that she got tired of getting called to the principal's office and receiving notes from the teacher. Tomas had begun to complain about school and told the researcher that his favorite thing in school was recess, when he could play soccer and baseball, the activities he considered himself to be best at. His parents had seriously considered transferring him to the catholic school, and probably would have done so, had it not been for the delay caused by the teachers' strike that year.

The Grade Two teacher was greatly disturbed by Tomas's "garbled speech" and by his restlessness. She was convinced that he had some speech impediment and behavioural disturbance and she insisted that he be tested for both. In the end, she only succeeded in having the speech assessment done; the parents were adamant in their refusal to have Tomas tested by the psychologist which, for them, was tantamount to admitting that "Tomas is crazy". As far as the language tests were concerned, when the researcher enquired about the mother's opinion of the results, she was satisfied that it proved that "Tomas is smart", which left the researcher in doubt as to whether she had really understood what the test was really about; or it may be that she had indeed gleaned its essence. As for the teacher, she was somewhat surprised to find out that Tomas had average skills for his age as far as comprehension, ability to follow directions and recall information. Mistakes in comprehension and understanding were due to inattention. Where he was found to experience some difficulties, was in "expressive language" (word and sentence forms) and "pragmatic skills" (essentially social verbal behaviour deemed to be inappropriate). But even the word and sentence forms revealed essentially average ability, in spite of the fact that some forms were agrammatical (some a result of overgeneralizations), some of the ideas and/or sentences were confused, and some of the words reversed; semantic and phonemic confusions were noticed; generally indistinct articulation and difficulty with multisyllabic words were evident.

What the reseacher found interesting with this report (which she judges to be accurate) is that some of the agrammatical forms and pragmatic skills cited were analysed without reference to the cultural and social class component of the school milieu. The fact that Tomas says, according to the assessment, "gonna" instead of "will" and "mines" instead of "mine", should be seen as an expression of the school area dialect rather than a simple individual characteristic. The fact that "he interrupted conversations with irrelevancies" or could be "inappropriate with his manner of speech" could be a matter of subjective interpretation on the part of the assessor.

This inappropriateness of "pragmatic skills" was one of Tomas's characteristics that disturbed the teacher. She was upset by the fact that he did not use appropriate forms such as turn-taking in class discussion or interventions and, eventually, she felt impelled to ignore him.

> "He is always yelling out and for this reason I ignore him; unless he were the only student for the language development, I would stop and discuss it [vocabulary question during story reading] with him. Because he is constantly asking, that is why I think he is very bright. He was always thinking about things one step above. [But] if everybody else started yelling out, we would have complete bedlam in the class."

Nonethless, Tomas got more rebuffed for participating in whole class discussion - because he did not do it in the appropriate form - than did other students, who were indifferent to the activity.

> May/88
> Ss come back from recess and sit on the carpet for story-reading. T is interrupted a few times by other adults. T reads "The Big Orange Splot". Tomas asks for the meaning of a word but T doesn't seem to hear. There's yet another interruption extraneous to the class. T resumes reading. Tomas asks for the meaning of the word "belfry", but T doesn't seem to hear. T shows pictures as she reads. Ss comment on pictures, "I like the castle", etc. T finishes book.

One of the disturbing things the researcher and the teacher noticed was Tomas's continued or increased restlessness, probably directly connected to his level of interest and motivation. The following class episode illustrates how problematic this situation still was almost at the end of the school year; again, it is in stark contrast to Tomas's behaviour during story-reading.

> May/88
> 01:29
> T asks Ss to settle down, throw gum out, etc. Ss move in closer to her on the carpet. T says usual formula for silence and tells Ss she wants them to continue this morning's activity -- completing the pioneer folder [pattern book]. T adds that she wants noone at the house centre; they may only work on the carpet or at their desks. X sits at his desk.
> 01:32
> X colours the drawing he did this morning on the page that has the caption "Here's the mill". T talks to X.
> X continues to colour. T compliments him on how much better it looks.
> 01:37
> X shows the pioneer village book to T. T asks him to read; tells him to complete it [drawing and colouring].
> 01:39
> X sits to complete the last two pages; gets up again to consult T. T tells him to add trees, etc.
> 01:43
> X gets up to show work to T.

01:44
X sits again and continues colouring.
01:45
X gets up to see T but a girl is with her. He waits for T.
01:46
T comments on X's colouring; says that his green lines look like spinach or spaghetti and tells him to try again. X sits and colours.
01:47
X gets up to show work to T. T asks him to colour drawing in some more and asks: "Can you normally see through a horse's stomach?". X sits and colours the horse brown.
01:48
X gets up to talk to Benjamin.
01:49
X waits for T who is busy with other Ss. He goes back to his desk but returns to wait for T.

01:51
T praises his colouring and questions the work done on another page.
01:52
X sits and colours that page.
01:53
X gets up and waits for T.
01:54
X talks to T. T asks him about parts of drawing not covered by crayon. X sits and colours.
01:55
X gets up again to see T. T tells him to go through pages himself and only come to see her when he is finished.

01:58
X shows his book to T. T goes through it and tells him one page needs filling in and, to help him, shows him a picture of the store at Pionner village in the workbook from which she photocopied the sheets Ss have been colouring for their Pioneer village folders.
02:00
X sits and redoes picture of the store from the workbook.
02:01
X gets up with the workbook to see T but she's busy with another S. He gives her back the workbook.
02:03
X goes back to his desk, does a bit more colouring.
02:04
X waits for T again. She is still busy with the same S.
02:06
T shows book to T. T congratulates him for working hard. T goes over the check list to see what else X needs to complete and asks him for the spring folder. X looks for folder on the shelf under his desk top.

> 02:08
> T looks inside his folder and gives him a butterfly paper cut-out for the compound words. X sits with the cut-out and colours it.
> [process repeats itself for another five minutes with Tomas getting up to show the colouring to T and she asking him to colour better.]
> 02:13
> X gets up to show work to T. T asks him if he's happy with it; if it's something he's proud of, he says yes and she accepts the work, by placing it inside the folder. T gets up and gives X a sheet of paper for the insect research [also part of the spring folder], tells him what to do; takes him to a spot near the wall clock and asks him to read it and not to come and see her for the next five minutes. X sits down but gets up to borrow markers from another S.
> [S sits down to draw an insect but four minutes later is up to see T again. T likes it but he doesn't know what to write beside it. T asks Ss to clean-up, marking the end of the period].

It seems the teacher saw the work at hand -- drawing and colouring the "Pioneer Village Book" -- as an opportunity to improve Tomas's hand-eye coordination by insisting on a proper colouring job. Also, she sought to improve his work habits by teaching him the value of completing work. However, one is tempted to question the literacy return value of this work for a student whose progress is lagging more and more in the course of repeating a grade. These are the teacher's thoughts on Tomas's low achievement and its causes, from the end of the year interview.

> "I am looking at a few of them now that I hope to be ahead of where they are now academically. And I don't know whether I can put the blame on myself or whether there are other forces on it. I think I failed some of them and with individual cases probably not. Especially with Tomas, he's the one that I think there's more there that's beyond my expertise to know what's going on there, that is he needs to be * and he needs to be tested, he needs some real investigation done. I'm not sure he would have been any different in any other room, he would have been a trial on any teacher; but I wonder if maybe I was as patient as I could have been with him (...) Mrs Silva is the one [parent] that is very concerned. Her concern is that 'We are not in kindergarten, why are we playing?'. And her philosophy of Tomas is that he needs just to be sat down and told to work. I have asked her to come and sit in the class; it's easier said than done to get Tomas to sit down and just do what he is told to do. Well, there are 24 children in the classroom [originally] and she needs to realize that things need to change at home a bit, he may be more settled at school. What would help is that he was out doing something in the evenings that he is good at whether it be swimming, soccer, something that is physical so that he feels good about himself when he goes to bed at night; he might come to school and be a more settled child. Rather than having this kid, with all this bouncy energy forced to sit in front of the TV and that's all she will let him do (...) I wonder if he is truly hyperactive and he needs a change of diet, medical controls put on him so he's a more settled child, because he is not stupid, he is very bright (...) The two that have been held back and repeating, Tomas and Jorge, are among the weakest in Grade One."

In fact, out of a class of 21 students, seven of whom were in Grade Two, the two project children of Portuguese background were ranked #14 (Tomas) and #19 (Jorge).

As one can see from this text, there is no doubt that Tomas's individual abilities and his home environment impose very real limitations on the acquisition of literacy behaviour. But one cannot disregard the reality of the classroom situation, where the school and the curriculum practices could have increased the number of opportunities to help Tomas and Jorge advance along the path towards literacy. If it is true that they had not stopped progressing in absolute terms, their achievement remained too low to make a difference in their lives.

Cristovao

In order to investigate further into the class dimension of the case studies, a Portuguese-speaking child from another school will now be featured in this paper. However, children from this school pose a difficulty for the writer, in that she followed them only for the first year of the project. During the following two years, for purely practical reasons, other project researchers continued the fieldwork in that school, although the last year L1 language assessment and the follow-up to the interviews with the Portuguese parents in that school were carried out by this researcher. It was necessary therefore, to interview the other field researchers in order to get a more global picture of the classroom situation, particularly the teachers'program and style, than could be gleaned from the ethnographic observational notes about the individual child under observation.

Cristovao - or Chris, as he is often called - is a Grade Two student who has been in the project for the duration of the fieldwork. He is blond and blue-eyed, but one rarely gets the opportunity to look into his eyes while talking to him. Chris's most prominent trait is his shyness with adults. He has a tendency to lower his eyes and answer in monosyllables; when hard-pressed to develop some topic, he often answers with a cryptic "I forgot". This reaction is in sharp contrast with his behaviour with other children (always boys) with whom he plays and interacts eagerly, often as the central figure. He is considered to be an excellent student and is well liked by his teachers, who nevertheless regret they don't know more about him as a person.

The Home Background

Chris's father is a supervisor in "warranty traffic" of auto electric parts for a well-known Canadian company. He has 12 years of school education which he began in his birthplace, the island of Madeira, and completed, for the most part in the island of Antigua, to which his family migrated when he was 11 years of age. He came to Canada in 1975 at 28 and up until that time he had worked in the family corner store. Chris's mother was born in Brazil of Madeiran parents who immigrated to Canada when she was 11 years old. She has completed 10 years of schooling and works as a clerk in life insurance general accounting. According to our criteria, this is the case of a family from a Medium SES.

In addition to eight year old Chris, the couple also have a daugher, Monica, who is a year younger and attends the same school. The family lives in the suburbs, very far from the school but, because the mother works downtown and the maternal grand-parents live close to school (which is located in the traditional Portuguese community area), the children aredropped off at the grand-parents' home early in the morning and are taken to and picked up from school by their grand-mother.

Chris's parents seemed very involved in the children's education and often gave them work to do. During his pre-school years, the parents bought story and work books, read to him and initiated him into letters and numbers without any resistance on the boy's part. When Chris went to JK he already knew some letters and the numbers up to 10, according to his mother. During Grade One, Chris showed an interest in his father's reading materials or bills that arrived in the mail. He began to write stories at home asking the parents to correct them for the appropriate spelling. However, the parents were fully aware of the dangers of over-correcting from having discussed this issue with the teacher.

A very important feature of the home instruction were the math workbooks bought by the parents. The children had exhausted all such books that were age-appropriate at the local store. Before Chris could read, the children would ask the parents to read them the workbook instructions and, without further ado, they would sit down to do the whole book in spite of the parents' plea that they leave some for the following day! Chris was not getting homework regularly in Grades One and Two, except for the occasional project. Instead, the children were given the workbooks to do. Home instruction was an activity often initiated by the parents (the mother giving more assistance than the father) but Chris did it willingly, according to his mother, and was well aware that it put him ahead of the class. Chris also loved puzzles, riddles and trying out experiments in the Chikadee and Owl magazines, to which the parents subscribe.

By the end of Grade Two he was already reading very well and only asked for assistance with a few words. Chris asked more questions about the Portuguese books, given that he is, understandably, more proficient in the English language. He was also writing stories without asking assistance from his parents. The mother has organized a folder for the children's writings. Chris occasionally reads to his sister, probably because of his experience in a split grade class.

The parents would like the children to have homework and so would Chris, according to the mother. In her opinion, an implicit benefit of that practice is that it keeps the parents informed about the curriculum throughout the year. Futhermore, it instills discipline and helps develop the child. The mother explained her son's willingness to do homework and to take part in other home instruction by the fact that Chris is a very active child. He would rather do something with pencil and paper than watch TV (although mother seemed to underestimate the amount of TV Chris watched, mostly at his grandparents'). Another factor seemd to be the close relationship with his sister. The children loved to talk, play and work together, although they also fought a great deal. The parents made no comment to the researcher to the effect that one child was brighter or doing better than the other -- both children seemed to be doing well in school. A third factor is that the children have a great deal of space to themselves. The researcher noticed that the residence's finished basement is a real "kids' world" with games, toys, TV and a school desk. However the children also seemed to be free to play and work upstairs in the living room area.

Chris attended the "After Four" program in school, French in Grade One and computers in Grade Two. He only started going to the public library in the school area in Grade Two, with his teacher and classmates. The parents judged that before this time he did not need the use of a public library, given the fact that they themselves purchased the books or that the children borrowed them from the school library.

As far as the parents' involvement in school is concerned, the mother seemed to be the more active. She went to all parent-teacher interviews and to many of the events in the evening (the Open Houses). The mother was very happy with the school, although she did not know other parents nor participate in volunteer activities because she does not live in the area and works full-time.

The parents were very happy with Chris's school performance. They judged that he loved school, that he was learning a great deal and that he could not be doing much better because he was already very advanced compared to the other children. The parents said they were ready to support both children for as long they needed to get a university education, given that they themselves were not able to get one. As they put it, "we would like him to have what we didn't have", a common statement made by Portuguese parents to the researcher. Monica expressed the desire to be a teacher but Chris had not thought of anything other than being a hockey player. The parents reported that they to instill in their children the need to get professional-type careers requiring a university education. "Nothing less than a lawyer or an engineer", they said in jest, but in the end, they recognize, it depends on them.

Bilingualism

In both households the home language is Portuguese. The grand-parents speak Portuguese with the children but understand English; moreover, two Canadian-born uncles of Chris also live in that home and it is probably true that English is also spoken among the members of the younger generation. When the children go back home in the evening, the home language is also Portuguese. In spite of the fact that both parents have been speakers of English since before their teens, this researcher found the parents' Portuguese to be excellent. And, until the time when Chris's sister went to kindergarten, both children communicated almost exclusively in Portuguese, according to the mother. Since then the parents found that, increasingly, they had to switch to English when the children did not understand the parents' conversation. Also, the children have a few cousins living nearby with whom they speak English and the family has no Portuguese neighbours.

Home instruction during the kindergarten years was done in English until Grade Two (Heritage language instruction started in Grade One), at which point the parents ordered books and workbooks from Brazil and Portugal. For the first two years of life, Chris was looked after by his mother; the grand-mother took over child-care afterwards. The grand-mother used to tell Chris stories in Portuguese occasionally but he always seemed to prefer to be read stories by his parents and look at the book pictures.

Chris has been attending Heritage Language class since Grade One. In his school the language class is integrated, so the children are able to attend these classes several times a week for 45 minutes. In Grade One, Chris also attended the after-school French language program, twice a week for 45 minutes. But it must be said that, initially, Chris did not attend Heritage class willingly, because he did not want to speak Portuguese in school; by Grade Two he still did not like it "sometimes", in spite of the fact that he no longer showed any resistance to his parents. We have no first-hand information about Chris's behaviour in Heritage language class, either from observations or teacher interviews. The school records show a "Progress Report" at the end of Grade One by the heritage language teacher. She deemed his listening and speaking and work habits to be "Excellent" and his reading and writing "good". She also noted that "He is hardworking and completes all his assignments". In addition, this researcher assessed Chris's proficiency in Portuguese at the begining and at the end of the three year research project. He was found to have a high ("native-like control") level of proficiency in reading, writing and listening. The mistakes he made were age-appropriate, although he spoke with an accent. Otherwise, his spoken Portuguese was difficult to assess given his shyness. However, he showed good control of reading and writing, the highest for our sample of Portuguese-speaking children in the lower grades. He used no invented spelling. This proficiency is a tribute to a combination of heritage language instruction, home instruction and Chris's own innate ability.

At the end of Grade Two, the family took a summer vacation in Portugal, Chris's first, which in the parents' opinion greatly helped to consolidate both children's knowledge of that language. However, this trip took place after the completion of the field work and did not affect the results of the assessment.

The classroom situation

Kindergarten

Chris had the same kindergarten teacher in both years; this woman was also Monica's JK teacher. The teacher noted in the "Pre-School Profile Sheets" that Chris spoke some English upon entry and that his mother told her that "he had picked up considerable English in the last few months". He quickly got immersed in his play, working with great concentration; she also noted that he he knew some letters and numbers; he loved playing in the outdoors.

The JK reports noted that he was a quiet and reserved child who was "a part of the group" but did not like "any large group attention focussed upon him"; he was an attentive listener and took "a quiet part in group songs and games". His language was difficult to assess, given that he spoke so little, but he understood most of what happened in class and followed routines easily. He played mostly by himself indoors and showed plenty of initiative in choosing his own activities, mostly toys as opposed to paper and pencil or paint brush activities. Outdoors, he proved himself to be much more noisy and sociable. In general he appeared self-confident and independant and very co-operative.

By year's end, the teacher noted that he was getting to be more outgoing and sociable, although still not willing to speak out in front of the large group unless directly addressed. Drawings and paintings had become integrated in his play and his math skills were developing well. He recognized his printed name and was "struggling" to write it himself.

The SK reports noted that he had begun to "offer his ideas and observations in front of the whole group" and that he was able to cope with this kind of attention. His expressed ideas showed that he had been processing class knowledge. Cristovao could write his name and was beginning to show interest in the writing centre.

By the year's end he was described as having taken tremendous strides -- "excellent oral language", "fairly extensive background knowledge", "makes incredibly complex creations with our construction toys". He was beginning to write words with correct initial and final consonants on his drawings; could identify lower and upper case letters and read most of the other childrens' printed names; showed good math skills and, in general, proved himself to be a very mature and self-reliant child. His group leadership skills, which had begun to develop outdoors, had "moved indoors".

In talking to the researchers, the teacher had only complimentary things to say about Chris and his parents.

> "He's a wonderful little fellow; if the school system was full of Cristovaos we would have no problem whatsoever. And a wonderfully concerned set of parents -- I've seen mostly the mother -- but they are very cooperative and very anxious to do whatever is right. Oh yes! They read him books and I know they've helped. They got the little pre-math and pre-writing books and they sit down and look at the "A's and B's" (...). He's a very bright little fellow (...) he's quite popular with the other children and he's a leader in a quiet way (...). Mom reports that he loves numbers and letters and I've found out that at school too. And she feels that he is further along in learning than Monica, he's more interested in numbers and letters. And apparently he's very good with math games at home -- mother's got a lot of games. She said that even last year he could count down the days to a party. He's very alert. I mentioned about bringing things for the classroom. I brought some flowers from my garden in September and Cristovao turns up a couple of days later with flowers from their home. Well, I don't need to tell you about the alertness of getting it at home, but it is also a great bother. They live up there in X [suburbs] and mom had to get up, maybe picked them the night before and put them in some water, because she leaves at the crack of dawn; get them in the car the next morning, getting to grandma's and then make sure that they get back here to school, so it was a big production... and along they came!"

The teacher's high regard for Chris as a student is also reflected in the rank she assigned him in class -- second place after Ben, an Oriental boy and one of our project children -- and in the SOLOM and Math Concepts assessments. Chris got the highest scores in the former and above average scores for the latter. It should be said that the classroom population of 17 had no more than two Anglo students and they were not project children (Eric, our English-speaking project child came from a mixed Anglo and Portuguese background). Most of the others were from Chinese or Portuguese-speaking families (13). Another factor that must be brought to the fore is the relative lateness in the year (around April) of the introduction of the writing component of the program as compared to the other school. Also, the teaching assistant, an Oriental woman whose English was not fluent, did no teaching in the classroom. She had more of a helping role -- cleaning up and tidying up, putting aprons on children for painting and water centre activities, ocasionnally checking on the children's activity -- as well as doing liaison work with the Chinese-speaking parents.

This researcher's impressions of Cristovao as a student and as a person confirm those of the kindergarten teacher. The scores of the "Sand and Stones" to assess early acquisition of literacy skills and concepts (7 points out of 24) were just average for the two schools concerned, but it was obvious that Chris was very inhibited in that context and that probably he could have done better in that assessment situation if it were not for his inhibition with adults. And as far as the project reading, math and writing assessments went, the results show that Chris was above average for his cohort in reading and math. And in writing, Chris went from the stage where the child makes a distinction between writing and drawing and where a few letters can be recognized (level A2) to the writing of isolated words labeling the picture or parts of it (level B1). The highest score for his cohort was level B3.

In looking at the classroom observations, the most meaningful episodes during SK (as well as Grades One and Two) refer to two types of interaction -- one with classmates and the other with the teacher. The first observation, in October 85, shows a very domineering, even destructive, Chris playing with small construction blocks with other boys on a one-to-one basis. By the time of the second observation, in February 86, Chris plays in the water centre with a group and he seems to be much less domineering. The most interesting feature of this episode is the interaction between Chris and the teacher about the water bubbles -- the transcript shows him answering in monosyllables but, neverthless, learning is obviously taking place.

February 86
[X is playing in the water with Vince and Eric. Ss squeeze plastic
bottles with water, trying to fill them up. T interacts with the group.]
Te - What are you doing there? [to Vince]
Vi - I'm * of squeezing water in
Te - And is it going in?
Vi - No! Ugh!
Te - Why isn't it going in?
Vi - I'm doing the. oop! [chuckles, sounds as if he is avoiding answering]
Te - Why-why isn't it going in very much?
Vi - But they're going in!
Te - Is there any more room for water in there? No?
Well that's your problem you see there's no more room
Cristovao (raising pitch) . What are you doing here?
X - Bubbles
Te - Yes (high-pitched) I'm trying to decide
How come those bubbles are going in there? [noise of water]
Oh I know what's happening .. What's coming out of the bottle?
X - Water
Te - Water and as the water comes out what's going in?
X - Bubbles
Te - Yeah
Do you know what bubbles are made of? What are those bubbles?
Vi - Soap?
Te - No no what's all around us here? [moving arms, meaning air]
What do you call this?
X - Water
Te - No here ..
What do you breath?
X - [X breathes heavily]
Nose
Te - No but do you call this stuff that goes into your . your nose and
your lungs [Vince and Eric make noises playing with water]
Air? That's right
We are surrounded by air and then as water comes out
what do you think is going in?
X - Air
Te - That's right those bubbles . that's air going in you see?

Lastly there is an episode in the writing period, also in April, which is not transcribed but which shows how Chris also exhibits the behaviour required to do well in this type of activity.

April 1986
2:05
T asks Ss to go play and Anni picks X but T won't let him because he is going to do writing.
2:07
X sits with Joanne and 2 boys. X asks them if they remember a certain boy, a "copy dog".
2:08
The conversation is interrupted by Ss playing instruments at the new listening centre -- all Ss in the group look that way for a while. Then, X draws and so do other Ss at his table. Joanne has left to colour her drawing at the activity chart on the easel. A couple of minutes later she comes back and and asks one of the boys what he is doing; others get involved in task talk, Anthony and Ben.
2:11
Ss work silently again. Ss at the music table play the xylophone loudly.
2:13
X asks about the robin and Joanne responds. T comes over and says that she and they are going to do some writing. T takes Ben to colour. TA comes by, comments on their work and addresses X briefly. When she goes away, he addresses other Ss about task. Group works in silence for a moment but X adresses other Ss again about crayons. He needs some red, takes the markers and makes some red dots; says he is going to use some green. He asks Joanne, in a severe tone where her robin is. Ss talk about colours, drawing a nest. TA comes around but T motions her to move away.
2:19
Anthony has finished and T sits with him to transcribe his story. X attends. A couple of minutes later, the T moves away and X continues to draw his landscape.
2:22
T comes around to check his writing and comments about X's work. T gets up to attend to David and comes back to transcribe Joanne's story. Again, X attends but not Ben. T transcribes sentences on the drawing, beside items. T asks Joanne to write and goes away. X is watching but T tells him to wait. X resumes drawing.
2:26
T sits with X and conferences. X says that his drawing shows a pond and names different kinds of flowers around it; there's a robin. T writes "some tulips are" and "The robin is going to get the worm". Joanne asks T to play. X says there is a nest. T writes "The cherry tree -- a nest in it".T gives instructions to TA.
2:30
T asks X to write on his own. X writes WEM SUN under drawing of sun and some invented spelling. T looks on.
2:31
X calls for T and he asks him to read to her.
2:33
X puts pastels away and tries to decide on activity. He goes to

> the bookcase for the construction blocks. Plays with a boy but a few minutes later moves away and plays on his own.
> 2:39
> Ben comes over to play with X. X tells him what he is doing.
> [The two boys play together on construction for the remainder of the period]

As one can see in this observation, Chris was often the initiator of conversation on task. The teacher initiated the conferencing but Chris approached her the second time for more conferencing. The teacher's method was one of transcribing the oral story for modeling, presumably, but in Chris's case, he added on to the information written by the teacher, labeling the items that were missing in her text.

By April, it was obvious that Chris has mastered the social skills required in play. In the play episode observed, which took place after the writing activity, he and Ben did complex constructions, each one in turn taking the lead.

Chris's knowledge of writing and his willingness to do it could be contrasted with that of another Portuguese-speaking project boy, David, who was his preferred friend throughout the project. David is quite a character, extremely sociable, outspoken and outgoing; unlike Chris, he likes to play with girls as well as boys. His social background is also different from Chris's. His father, a postal worker, and his mother, a cafeteria worker, are from an Intermediate SES background. Both parents are Portuguese-speaking but came to Canada at a young age, the mother before her teens, the father as a teenager. Both completed high-school in Canada and the home language is English except when addressing the grand-mother, who lives upstairs. David can get by in Portuguese. According to the interview with the parents, instruction at home is given mostly by the older sister, but only upon request; playing school with his sister was the only form of pre-school instruction that he got. David showed an obvious preference for play, specially with the big construction blocks and, in the last trimester of the SK year, he was still exhibiting little inclination to do pencil and paper work. But David is very bright, particularly in those areas where shy Chris does not shine -- oral participation within the large group; he also has a great sense of humour and showmanship. He was ranked #3 by the teacher. The teacher explained that for this reason David was extremely popular but, in reality, the two boys tended not to play together in SK which the researcher noticed as well.

Chris was much more attracted to small block type construction, puzzles, etc. but, interestingly enough, when asked what was his favorite thing to do in school, Chris named the song "Baba White Sheep"; when asked what he would do given a choice, he mentioned "play with anything" and not writing or doing numbers. He answered the question about why he came to school with "It's fun!". For Chris, like David, the play component was obviously the most significant but with the difference that Chris went to Grade One already having a foundation for the literacy behaviour that David was slower in acquiring -- a knowledge of reading, writing and math combined with well-developed small motor skills.

Grades One and Two

As in kindergarten, Chris had the same teacher for Grades One and Two, in both cases family groupings (Grades One/Two/Three in year 1 and Grades Two/Three in year 2). Also, as in the previous two years, the class population consisted mainly of children from Portuguese and Oriental families. When our English-speaking boy, Eric, moved out of the school, he had to be replaced with a Portuguese-speaking child, Connie, as there were no other English-speaking children in the class.

The male teacher described his program in the "Appraisal for Better Curriculum Phase II Primary" form for Chris as lacking teaching materials such as word cards, math and reading stencils, workbooks and labs, although he made use of basal readers. Activities such as reading to children, drama/role playing and music took place daily. It seems then that the home and school instruction complemented each other, given the emphasis at home on workbooks, particularly in math. The teacher was also very keen on the math program.

Chris continued to do very well academically but the glowing final report he received from his kindergarten teacher about his self-confidence and level of comfort with the large group did not seem to carry into the next grade; or perhaps the second teacher's perception of his personality did not benefit from witnessing the progress made from the beginning years. We noted before that this tends to be the case for any type of problem the child is perceived to have, whether it be behavioural, linguistic or academic. This teacher's program gave considerable importance to the children being outgoing and extroverted, because of the free dramatic play activity. This activity did not temperamentally suit shy children, such as Chris and Ben (see Lam's case study). The Appraisal for Better Curriculum form, filled out by the teacher at the end of Grade One, indicated that Chris needed some Language development, in particular to "encourage oral language using musical activities, poetry, puppets, hands-on experiences"; also Social/Emotional development, namely "open-ended activities that encourage risk-taking and one-to-one activities and opportunities for teacher/child proximity".

As far as the report cards are concerned, most curriculum areas were evaluated as "good", with a fair number of them marked "very good", for the November, March and June Grade One reports. Only in the first and second reports were there a couple of items marked only "satisfactory", in both cases "math skills" and "math problem solving", which is interesting given the emphasis on math work at home. Additional comments for November stated that he "is clearly an enthusiastic pupil", "is beginning to show interest in reading books" and "is able to follow pattern-books" and "has a reading vocabulary of about 20 words". He was writing a story everyday using invented spelling; in math, he was able to sort and classify a variety of objects and was beginning to make his own patterns.

By March he had completed his first reader (out of 3 to complete the program); was writing page-long stories and was showing a good grasp of phonic skills. In math, he could illustrate "greater and less" on a graph and was learning to measure with non-standard units of measurement. He also "contributed nicely to the drama centre". Finally in June, the closing comments refer to his imaginative stories and his having acquired most Grade One math concepts.

In Grade Two, The November report showed that most subject matters were good, work habits were "very good" and that only a few items needed improvement, these being oral language and oral reading. By June, no item needed improvement and subjects matters were equally divided between "good" and "very good", the latter being math, work habits, written language and reading comprehension. Written comments were to the effect that Chris was more confident and assumed some leadership tasks, at times initiating activities and discussions. He was reading the last primer and was writing stories everyday. His spelling was increasingly more standardized. By June, the teacher was particularly impressed with Chris's gains in reading -- he was on the first Grade Three reader and was often reading library books to small groups of children. Similar progress could be seen in writing -- Chris was writing long stories in chapters or parts. In addition, he had learned all Grade Two math concepts.

Chris considered himself to be a good writer and reader; in Grade One he was, in his own opinion, one who read and wrote lots of stories. When asked the same question in Grade Two, he considered that he must be a good reader and writer because everybody asked him (and Ben) questions about difficult words. These were, in his opinion, the hardest things about reading and writing.

The teacher's positive view of Chris was also evident in the SOLOM and Math Concepts survey. He was ranked very highly in math, particularly in Grade Two, whereas the SOLOM showed a definite progression in oral language proficiency going from an average oral competence to a high one in Grade Two.

The teacher interview reiterated this good opinion of Chris and his family. But one can see that, in spite of his written report card comments, the teacher still saw Chris as a very shy boy, lacking in self-confidence -- that is the lasting overall perception he had of him -- and this notwithstanding the pattern that emerged from the two teacher interviews and report cards over the four year period. This pattern seems to be that it takes Chris a full year with a new teacher before he comes out of his shell, so to speak, and begins to show his "leadership skills". It seems to us that Chris is not lacking in self-confidence -- he even "teased" his teacher -- but rather that he is an introvert, unlike ebullient David and Connie.

> "Chris's mother - I met his mother many times - (...) I like her a great deal. She is very supportive of me and the program....Still, Chris is so shy and lacking in self-confidence. He will join a play but speaks very softly. You can't hear him (...) He's very bright, you know, very bright. His mother is supportive [but] it is difficult to measure his language acquisition (...). Chris is the brightest of the bunch and I think, if anything, has kept through to the initial assessment, in that he can quickly learn new concepts. He is very introspective and he is very shy and he continues that way. He has made great strides academically but I don't see him socially very different from the way he used to be. Sometimes he is very affectionate with me and he teases me.
>
> Chris is above [grade level] in reading and occasionally he writes a good story but he doesn't write as much as he reads. When he does write it's very good. But he doesn't, it's not consistent.
>
> David is about a year behind in both reading and writing, which is much better than what he was last year [grade 1]. Last year he was actually at the primer- pre-primer level. Connie is about a year behind in reading and writing (...) David and Connie were very extroverted but less studious (...) Chris really lives in a world of his own (...) Yes he is very introverted. They [parents] come from Brazil and he seems to have a very good grasp of general knowledge".

The teacher's ranking of Chris improved with time as well; as with the kindergarten years, Chris and Ben competed for #1 place in class, with Ben taking it in Grade One and Chris in Grade Two. David and Connie, on the other hand, were ranked last and next to last, respectively, in Grade One but their ranks improved considerably in Grade Two -- top third of the class for David and middle third for Connie. In fact, the teacher had seriously considered retaining David in Grade One, in spite of his good oral language and self-confidence, because his grasp of math, reading, and writing was quite poor. He was put on a special math homework program by the teacher in collaboration with his father. The father would meet with the teacher twice a week but it seems, from the home interview, that the older sister was the one who gave David most assistance at home, at his request, except, perhaps for that period. It worked because, according to our project's assessment, David ranked above average for the Grade Two cohort in math, although he remained below average in reading in writing. It must be said that David's teen-aged sister, an employed high-school student, was probably very busy herself. The father explained the dearth of home instruction as a function of the parents' work and of David's young age.

Also, in spite of his interest in the dramatic play activity, the teacher remained unaware that David's father was a member of a Portuguese amateur theatre group. The family often did play-acting at home, hence David's great skill with that medium in class. Another interesting fact that came out of the parents'interview had to do with the fact that David's father did not think that he or any of his children could ever be university-educated professionals because none of them showed much interest in school. David was described as a child who was "spoiled" with a great deal of attention and affection and whose interest in physical activities, such as wrestling, was greatly encouraged. He also showed emotional maturity and an interest in the opposite sex.

The father hoped that David would inherit something of his drawing skill, his favorite paper and pencil activity. The lack of emphasis in the home on academic instruction in favour of artistic skills, physical prowess and TV watching (quite different from that of Chris's home situation), would explain, to some extent, why David was still behind in reading and writing. Also, one of the school-based researchers noticed that David tended to be undisciplined and was often off task.

Another school-based researcher communicated to the writer that during the course of the year, the dramatic play activity, which involved students dressing up and improvising a play, moved from the end of the class in the afternoon, to the morning activities, to become integrated with other activities, particularly story-writing. As the play activity became more central, children like David and Connie were able to do very well, whereas Chris never seemed to shine in that situation, although he participated.

In the project's own assessment of writing, reading and math, as we have seen, Chris was found to be above average for his cohort in reading and math. In writing, he progressed from a single sentence accompanying a picture, a sentence in which words were represented by beginning and end consonants (level B2), to a longer text of several linked sentences and clearly formed words but with the picture still being of central importance (level B4). But Chris was clearly breaking into the narrative stage by the end of Grade One and was definitely there at the beginning of Grade Two (level C1). By the end of Grade Two he was writing long stories with many words spelled conventionally (level C4). The highest for the cohort was level C6.

As far as classroom observations went for Grade One, it seems that the teacher's interview impressions concurred well with the researcher's observations. Chris was a conciencious student, very much on task. He completed his assignments and was a self-confident child who knew what do and how to do it most of the time, not needing to consult his peers or the teacher. Yet he was sociable with his peers, all boys, doing his writing very rapidly in the meantime. He tended, as in the previous year, to become serious when approached by the teacher (who did a lot of individual conferencing with students) and to answer in monosyllables. Also, in the whole class situation, he was prone to volunteer his answers by raising his hand but showing no anxiety to be picked by the teacher or to show dismay if he was not. By and large he continued to be very close to David. A particular incident in the middle of the year showed how concerned the teacher felt about Chris's shyness with adults.

> April 87
> 9:40
> As X comes back [from the snack table] , T talks to him. T asks him if he knows the choice of tasks he has given him to do this morning. X nods his head and tells T what the choices are. T asks him then why he is not doing it and whether he is upset about something. X shakes his head, saying no. T asks X to give him a smile. T comments "What a sad smile!". T then leaves. X starts eating the grapes that he brought back earlier from the snack table and talks to the boys. He laughs as he talks to them. X listens to the boys for a while and talks a little. There are four boys sitting at X's desk -- two oriental boys and two Portuguese ones, Sergio and David.
> 9:42
> X starts to verbalize what he is going to write. He writes "MY ONTHR. Sweing" and then draws a line underneath. He stops to play with the [math activity] scales for a minute and then writes again: "SERgio WAS PESHING". Next, X writes "THE" and stops.
> 9:46
> X starts to play with the scale. He is putting objects from the table onto the scale bowl. He talks to David and a Chinese boy from the group while playing.
> 9:50
> X goes to show T his writing. T asks him to tell him about his story. X says: "Me on the swing, Sergio is pushing me". T says "good". X goes back to his desk and continues to write.
> 9:52
> X writes a few letters, stops and writes again. He seems to be thinking about what to write when he stops because he stares into space. Most of the other boys have gone.
> 9:55
> The other boys come back and X starts talking to them. He talks to David about a TV cartoon. X goes back to his writing. RO interacts with X about his story. X resumes writing vigorously. "AND I fell on SeRgio AND I WAS ONDER tHE [new page] SWeing David ["wa" crossed out] WAS kekig [kicking] Me ["the end" is crossed out]. X draws a picture in the middle of the page.

> 10:05
> X stops writing. He calls one of the Chinese boys and says "you are this", raising his middle finger. The boy tells X he is not nice but X talks to the boy who then answers him in a friendly way. Walter comes to ask group the spelling of "isn't" but nobody answers him seriously. T calls Walter. Sergio asks X for another spelling of a word.
> 10:15
> T comes to see X and asks him to read his story. X does:"Me on the swing / Sergio was pushing the swing and I fell on Sergio and I was under the swing/ David was kicking me". T asks whether it's a real story. X says yes. Sergio joins the conversation, explaining what happened. T asks X if that's why X doesn't feel well this morning. X doesn't reply. T asks X where he got kicked and takes a look at the spot and talks to X a little; asks X to put the writing away. [At the end of the morning period T decides to have a time to listen topeople who are upset about other people and want to tell. This happened as a result of complaints some girls made to him about other girls' behaviour. A couple of children put up their hands but X is not one of them. He simply sits and listens.]

In this episode, as in the previous one, Chris was well on task but he did not stop being sociable. Although he was quite willing to get up and initiate a conference with the teacher about his writing, he was circumspect when the teacher addressed him about the morning's tasks. The teacher mistakenly believed that he was sad and tried to elicit a smile from him and find out the nature of his upset. But, as became obvious to the researcher, Chris was not really upset and certainly not with David, the supposed perpetrator of his unhappiness that day. He laughed, talked and worked with David. Later in the morning they did math activity together -- estimating and weighing with the scales. Also, during "upset tell time" Chris did not bring up the subject of his story. However, the teacher seemed reassured, after reading his story, that he had found the reason for Chris's supposedly sad mood. In fact, the teacher seemed to try to assuage his own anxiety in dealing with Chris's inhibition with adults.

In the following year, the class observation notes tell us that Chris volonteerd in whole group activities from the first trimester. And he certainly continued to be a key participant in small group activities. However, he still tended to select David, or vice-versa, in these activities -- crafts or math -- and sometimes the two boys vied for the leadership role.

November/87
9:45
David is in the play corner talking to a couple of boys. David calls X who joins him and leaves his book on the desk.
(...)
X joins David's group who are playing with some styrofoam. The group consists of two Chinese boys, David and X. RO asks one of the boys what they are to do. He tells her he is doing a robot.
9:55
David uses a long strip of masking tape to join the bottom of the box together. X tells him not to waste too much; that if T asks who wastes the tape, they have to tell the truth. RO asks if the robot can stand up. X and a boy say it can but X is stopped by one of the boys. X leaves the group for a while and goes to the other side of the room. He wanders for a while then comes back. The boys continue to attach a set of styrofoam containers on each side of the box. They say they are the robot's arms. Ricky and Connie (both Portuguese-speaking Ss) also join the group. Connie, Ricky and X are giving suggestions to David regarding how to do the robot's body. Ricky says David should glue it; X says he should draw it, etc. X tells group he wants to see if the robot can stand up. David asks a boy to hold the legs but the boy says he will hold one of the arms. X is holding the head. Connie says they should put a computer behind it so that the robot will talk. Anthony, who does not belong to the group, tells group "it's a great job". T asks how they make the arms move; the boys reply "pencils". T asks group if they should ask the principal to see it. The boys agree. Connie tries to tell the T what she suggested but he doesn't hear her and calls the office. T comes back to tell boys to tidy up the area.
10:15
X and David are having a fight because X wants to put two tubes on the arms but David rejects the idea saying that X will make the robot fall. David adds "it's not yours". X replies "Yes, it is. I helped to do the head and the arms". T comes over and asks if they are having a fight. David explains problem. T doesn't give any specific response to David, looks at the robot and goes away. David lets X put the tubes on the arms, but they won't stay so David takes them down and the argument ceases. Someone suggests that they should put up a sign saying "don't touch". X gets a pen and a piece of paper and writes "don't tech". David takes over the marker and draws a person with one hand up indicating the same message. The boys write down their names on the robot.
The principal comes to see the robot. She asks the boys if the robot has a name. David replies "Frankie" right away. X and David agree to call it Frankie. The principal asks questions about the robot's features. The principal leaves.
10:20
David suggests that the group should move away all things behind the robot on the counter, so that when the kids want them, they won't knock down the robot. The boys comply. After doing so, David alls out to the children warning them not to touch it.

@10:22
T comes over and asks who made the robot. The group members reply. T tells them to get their storybook out and draw a picture of the robot immediately. The boys get their books. X asks Anthony if he can borrow his crayons, boy agrees and X takes a few of them and comes to sit in front of the robot. X lies on the floor and starts drawing a picture.
[T rings class bell for recesss. After recess the teacher does a whole class writing activity using an activity chart mounted on the easel about the robot making group episode. After this, he asks Ss to finish writing their stories and those who have to see him. X abandons the page he started before recess and starts a new one. He draws the new robot in red.]
11:04
X takes a green crayon and writes: "This is Alf". David moves close to X; asks him how to spell it. X says A-L-F. RO asks what is Alf. They have changed the robot's name from Frankie to Alf.

These observation excerpts were transposed at length to show the competition that took place between the two boys for control of the activity and David's effort to assert his leadership as one of the initiators. In the shuffle, the Chinese boys in the group were left behind, working as helpers. David and Chris made all the major decisions and named the robot, changed its name, etc. In the episode that follows, however, Chris vied for first place with a Chinese boy who was an "expert" at the activity in question.

May/88
1:58
T holds out a math sheet and explains/discusses what materials Ss can use to complete them. T discusses how size of objects being counted/estimated has consequences for how easy or difficult it is to estimate/count them.
2:04
T assigns groups. X and his group are assigned to the weighing corner.
2:06
T comes to X's group. T gets out the balance bar. Ss are working on what seems to be a conservation of mass task. Working in pairs, they are to record their observations on paper. T discusses what is observed when the scale is empty and what happens when you put things on. T places on a weight, explains what he observes and tells Ss what to write. T adds more pieces and continues. X is moderately involved, writing observations, but is not contributing questions or answers.
2:17
X finally contributes. X suggests 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 5. T praises X. Another S suggests something. T praises S.
2:20
T assigns a new problem for the group. They must do conservation with 6. They are to work in pairs.

> 2:21
> X writes equation after discussing with two other Ss. One of them is math whiz, Quang. X complains to Quang that he is too far ahead. Quang and X discuss how to make an equation using the balance bar. Quang is the most dominant of the four male Ss working with the bar. X is second in the pecking order. Quang gives X a chance to load the bar. They record their observations, thinking aloud. Quang, X and Ben discuss what they see on the beam.
> 2:34
> X suggests to Quang that they do "take-aways".
> 2:39
> T says "recess time". Quang and X continue for a minute, then leave for recess.
> [After recess Quang and X spontaneously return to the balance beam and continue observation and recording. James is also with them, does counting with Quang, who leads, but James is not recording anything on paper.]

In this observation, a contrast will be made between Chris's behaviour in the small, teacher-assigned math group when the teacher was present and when he was alone with his peers. As Chris and Quang competed to do well, other students were somewhat left behind, with the least dominant students relegated to the role of helpers rather than full participants. This is not an uncommon event when the group activity involves more than a pair of students.

By the year's end, the researcher noted that Chris tended to select for activity mates those children who were deemed to be expert at the academic activity at hand; this meant Ben in language arts and the recognized spelling authority in the class and Quang, the "math whiz" (ranked #9 by the teacher as to overall performance). Still, the researcher also noted that Chris was more interested (on task) and proficient in math than in language arts, although he would produce a fair amount of writing in a short time. This did not mean that Chris stopped befriending David. He still named David as one of his two favorite classmates for working with and playing with. But, in contrast with Grade One, he indicated his best friend to be Paul, a Chinese boy in Grade Three. And, already in Grade One, he had named two Oriental boys in Grade Three as being some of his closest friends, the other two being David and Sergio.

Chris's mother also mentioned to this writer that Chris got the urge to improve his spelling in part from the older children in the classroom. It seems then, that, like Benjamin, our first case study child, good students tend to select as friends and workmates children who are doing well like themselves. Another interesting point about Chris's selection of friends is that ethnicity seemed to play some kind of role along with academic competence -- David and Sergio are Portuguese-speaking but not among the best students in Chris's grade. Futhermore, in spite of friendships with Chinese boys, Chris never mentioned Ben as a friend, probably because he had been in competition with him since Kindergarten. Lastly, when asked if he had any dislikes as far as work and play mates, he mentioned girls, confirming what the researchers had observed in the classroom.

As far as favorite activities in school is concerned, Chris seemed to have a lasting fascination with building with Sonnos and Lego type materials. As we saw in SK, this was often his preferred activity and, when questioned again in Grade Two, he reiterated the same predilection, considering it to be the thing he liked best to do in school and also the most difficult. Chris also confirmed that his parents helped him whenever he needed assistance.

Chris is, in many ways, very different from the other Portuguese-speaking students encountered by the researchers in the two schools. From his looks to his temperament and academic performance, he does not fit the stereotype of the sociable, talkative child who lags behind academically, such as Tomas, Jorge, David and Connie, although his shyness with adults is not an uncommon cultural trait. His family, with their aptitude for language and numeracy skills and their emphasis on home instruction, is also atypical in our sample. Chris is high both in "proress" and "achievement"; his innate ability,, together with the instruction he receives at home, have gone a long way in placing him ahead of his class.

Discussion: Home and School Factors Limiting Success in School

We have just analysed, in some detail, the case studies of three boys and some of their classmates, observed in two schools over the course of the three year longitudinal project. Their progress and achievement in the acquisition of literacy behaviour in the classroom was, in most cases, observed from Kindergarten to Grade Two. Most of the children featured in this study are from Portuguese-speaking families and, with the exception of Cristovao, from a similar socio-economic background. A child from a middle-class English-speaking family, Benjamin, has also been studied.

By looking at these three case studies, we will attempt to draw some conclusions about these children's academic progress and achievement, as they relate to their ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. We will first examine some of the home and school factors so far discussed which, in our opinion, have held back Tomas and other Portuguese-Canadian working-class children in contrast to middle-class children, such as Benjamin and Cristovao.

Starting with the home situation, Tomas's early years at home, with his mother as his sole care-taker and with no other children to interact with orally until he started kindergarten, may indeed have resulted in his language development being delayed. We are mainly talking here about his limited conversational experience in Portuguese, but his restricted access to English, other than through television, must also be taken into account. Of course, many children of immigrant parents have the same limitations, particularly the eldest child in the family; but, for the most part, they become fluent in English in the first two or three years of school and are not considered to be "problem" speakers, like Tomas. Tomas's predicament might have been less serious had he had a greater facility with the spoken language, whatever the language, and had he been a better student. For example, in Grade Two one of our Chinese-speaking project children, Judith, still made similar mistakes in English which result from L1 interference but the teacher never singled her out to be tested because she was doing well in all areas of the curriculum, including writing. Also, she was more articulate.

In our sample, the few children who attended day-care were middle-class Anglo students (Jocelyn; Jonathan, a Grade Six student). They had the advantage of compounding language experiences with both adults in the home, and with adults and peers in the day-care -- both in English -- not to mention other curricular instruction, which gave them an academic headstart.

Benjamin and Cristovao stayed at home with their mothers during the first language acquisition years. Chris is the eldest but his mother is fluent in English and was able to help him ease the transition into English. Benjamin, whose home language is English, also profited from having an older brother and his friends.

A characteristic of the Canadian elementary school system that is particularly striking to those from other cultures is the emphasis on oral activities in the curriculum. The researchers observed that students who are articulate, outspoken and participatory in class discussions often have an edge over other students in academic achievement, and teachers tend to have high expectations of them, at least initially. This was the case with Benjamin and David. Conversely, students who are inarticulate and/or introverted, by nature, upbringing or because they are speakers of English as a second language, like Chris, Ben or Wei-Men, take time to make their mark in the classroom. But, in the end, it is the students' overall academic behaviour that counts, and rightly so. What the researchers observed was that those three boys' introverted behaviour was a cause of concern and anxiety to their teachers when, in reality, there was little to be worried about.

Another issue closely related to the cultural expectations of teachers was that of schooling as a means of transmitting social skills, part of these being leadership skills. A few teachers seemed to place undue emphasis on the ability to play an active role in group discussion, over and above academic progress, as it expressed itself in the child's interest and desire to participate. What became obvious to the researcher is that many of these skills are cultural and class-bound and are part of the middle-class value system, putting working-class students at a disadvantage. This was also observed in other situations, as we saw in Tomas's case, such as language assessment where these social skills are labeled "pragmatic skills".

The acquisition of leadership skills is also part of that value system, but often it is more implicit than explicit in the rules it generates in the classroom as a community. But this issue need not be developed here. Suffice it to say that both Benjamin and Chris were self-confident "leaders" in their own way whereas Tomas was not; and that Chris's brand of "leadership" was different from that of Benjamin. Whilst the latter left no doubt as to his self-confidence and knowledge, the former was more private in this informal role. He tended to "lead" in small group situations and, like Benjamin, he was very competitive under these conditions. But because he is an introverted child in the presence of adults, these traits were not easily apparent to his second teacher. In contrast to Tomas's home experience, Chris's confidence was reinforced at home. He was not unfavourably compared to his sister, or vice-versa, and certainly not in front of outsiders. Unfortunately, as we saw, Tomas's confidence was eroded, both at home and at school. From the happy, care-free child in kindergarten, he had grown full of self-doubt by Grade Two.

Tomas's and other working-class parents have concepts of literacy that are in themselves very limiting; in this, they are quite typical of the class background and ethnic group from which they come. There was no kindergarten education in Portugal, free or paid, anywhere but in the great urban centres. Furthermore, on the one hand, reading to a pre-school child is not seen as a logical step in the acquisition of literacy -- books are for children who are learning to read or can already read. For parents like the Silvas, pre-school children are to be addressed in the oral mode; learning to read and write is a part of the schooling process, like all other book-learning, perhaps with the exception of learning to write one's name. The same applies of course, to taking a child to the library before he knows how to read. In addition, many immigrant parents ignore the fact that the library has a section with baby-books, records and toys.

On the other hand, reading to a child in L1 when he is trying to aquire L2 is thought to interfere with the oral acquisition of the second language, as Tomas's parents believed it did. One must also not forget that the idea that skills in literacy can be transferred from one language to another is a fairly new and sophisticated notion that has gained acceptance from many teachers (but not necessarily most teachers) only in recent years. By and large, the researcher noticed that working-class Portuguese parents, whose children are not doing well in school, tend to see bilingualism as a liability rather than as an asset. This belief seems to be shared, at least implicitly, by their children, who resist, at least initally, going to heritage language classes. However, most see bilingualism as a desirable long-term goal and require the children to attend those classes. Only one such parent, Connie's mother, told the researcher that it was not bilingualism *per se* which was at stake in the case of her children, but rather their facility with the spoken word. Whereas Connie's brother was never fluent in Portuguese, even before coming to Canada, Nancy, who was born in Canada, has great facility in both languages, although she could barely read and write in Grade Two. As we discussed, the opposite was true with Tomas, who tended to be inarticulate in both languages and whose mother dealt with the problem with an "all-or-nothing" approach.

Moreover, once the child enters kindergarten, working-class parents may be inclined to see this as "real" school and not, as the teachers claim, a preparation for the "serious" work in the grades ahead (e.g. acquiring the notion of print and story) and for the acquisition of the social and physical skills required to accomplish it (e.g. learning turn-taking in discussion, to wield a pencil). Again, an emphasis on process above product is expressed. However, as we have seen before, Kindergarten is both preparation for, and actual initiation into, academic work; so these parents are not far off the mark, in spite of the curriculum philosophy expressed by teachers. Therefore, some type of formal paper and pencil instruction, whether the child has shown interest or inclination for it or not, may be expected by the parents. When it is not forthcoming, or when the teacher advises the parents to work with the child at home, it is understood that this means formal learning whereas the teachers really mean informal activities which involve oral literacy and numeracy skills (e.g. help to fold the laundry; play games; read traffic and store signs, etc). In other words, the parents sometimes have a concept of early education which clashes with that of the school -- they do not provide the experiences that the school thinks important and they do not value what the school provides (i.e. play and other forms of informal learning).

A word of caution is called for at this point. Lest one be tempted to generalize about Portuguese parents, notwithstanding their social background, we hasten to add that, as some teachers and other school staff pointed out to the researcher, not all working-class Portuguese parents see kindergarten in this fashion. Some are quite happy with the notion of kindergarten as play and preparation. Even if their children are experiencing difficulties, as Tomas did in the lower grades, they do not get overly concerned unless these persist in the higher grades. But at that point, according to teachers, it might be too late to correct those problems effectively.

Parents' understanding of school work and learning as desk, paper and pencil work are sometimes a source of strain between home and school. As the heritage, the kindergarten, and the Grade One/Two teachers remarked, Tomas's mother was incensed by what she saw as wasting the child's time with song, dance and play. Her product-oriented approach was very much in contrast with the developmental, process-oriented, methods of two out of the three teachers Tomas was exposed to. This led her to try to compensate at home with desk-type work, in old country style -- copy, drills, etc -- under the threat of losing play privileges; however, this may have added to Tomas's increased resistance to that type of work. In Benjamin's and Cristovao's cases, on the other hand, their parents' approach to home instruction seems to have been more or less shaped by the children's ability and willingness rather than by the lack of it, as in Tomas's case. Cristovao's teacher expressed this notion of homework when talking about his school's program.

> "We are trying to set up a program, a homework program. It's just that it goes against the popular concept of what homework is. (...) Somebody taking a couple of pieces of paper home and doing them over in a quiet corner. We just think of it as something that will require much more involvement of the parents as well. So they get homework [that] will be watching TV together and then discussing it afterwards. That's to be homework. (...) This has been very difficult because parents just want the children to do well and we want their children to do well and [it's] just that we see it from different points of view. Parents see it from the point of view of being able to sustain uh- focus and sit somewhere quietly and do pencil and paper activity. I'm not saying anything against that. That's ultimately all we would like children to do and be able to sustain that kind of focus. But I'm suggesting that it is inappropriate for a Grade One and Grade Two kid to do, to be able to form in this fashion, that children learn. There are certain phases in children's education and the phase that my children are in would require them to do different kinds of things.
>
> Their experiences must be enhanced. For instance, by cooking together, measuring out things, handling things, uh- sorting things, getting all the socks together that are fuzzy and black. That king of thing. They will be able to classify things. There are many, many areas to be addressed before you can actually take a pencil. Pencil and paper tasks are at the symbolic stage; all those things that are simple wiggles on the white paper to a kid who hasn't gone through that phase before. You can't really have a concept of five if you write 5 ten thousand times. You still don't know what 5 really is. Unless you have handled five crayons and you have handled three broken ones and two whole ones (...) You've got to work from the concrete and uh- when homework is assigned, parents are very disappointed a lot of times unless they are prepared to do it. They are disappointed because homework requires the parents have active interaction with the child and they just don't see it that way. Or they don't really know what to do, because they say 'this is the teacher's job and I don't know how to do this' (...) We had a math workshop and only three parents came. This is the whole school they invited."

Benjamin and Cristovao's parents, like other middle-class parents of both ethnic groups, understand the value of imparting literacy behaviour through books, either by reading to the child at an early age, or by giving the example of being adult readers; or even through informal learning opportunities. In fact, throughout our sample, middle-class parents preferred reading stories to pre-schoolers rather than telling them stories, playing games with them, etc. Also these parents may have less of a problem in understanding the philosophy behind the kindergarten program and in adhering to it and supplementing it at home with some informal instruction. On the one hand, they are loath to provide formal instruction unless the child requests it or shows other signs of being ready for it. On the other hand, the most successful children seemed to be those whose parents initiated (sometimes in agreement with the teacher) a period of home instruction on a regular basis. A good example of this was David, whose improvement in math was remarkable. By Grade Two he ranked above the project cohort in spite of his low overall academic achievement, which seemed to be due, at least in part, to a dearth of regular home instruction.

It is crucial to understand that the notions of progress and achievement are implicitly tied in with supplementary home instruction (and some measure of volunteer activities in school), which often rests on the mothers' shoulders, particularly in the case of middle-class homemakers like Benjamin's mother and the group of Anglo mothers we alluded to in his case study. For working-class parents, this is an intrinsic but not explicit component of the education system, which may not be readily apparent to them. Or, if it is, those parents may simply not have the time, energy and/or the linguistic, academic knowledge and self-assurance to provide this type of help. This is Mrs Silva's case. The researcher noticed that, in a number of working-class immigrant households, Tomas's included, notwithstanding the fact that the father is the one who speaks more English and has had more formal instruction in that language, it is still up to the mother to provide academic assistance to the child, or to go to parents' interviews. Fathers tend to work longer hours and therefore to leave such concerns to mothers or teen-age children, as in the case of David. This is not to say, of course, that middle-class parents always have the time and energy to initiate home instruction on a regular basis, like Cristovao's mother. But the fact that she and her husband did find time to do it, in spite of their full-time jobs, is indicative of a very special effort and commitment to the child's education. In Cristovao's case, also, the father was also more involved in home instruction than other Portuguese fathers in our sample -- another contributory factor to his success.

At any rate, the way Tomas's mother conducted her home instruction seemed to be directly related to Tomas's restlessness and the need for constant attention on the teacher's part, although, as we have seen, this behaviour characteristic did not apply to other classroom activities which do not require the use of paper and pencil, for Tomas was capable of great concentration when attending to reading, class discussion or other whole-class, informal learning activities in the rug area of the classroom. In addition, the use of physical and psychological punishment for school-related underachievement or misbehaviour, and the conscious or unconscious fanning of sibling rivalry to "shame" the child into improving his academic performance, are other strategies not uncommonly used by working-class parents, but which may backfire and lead to increased resistance to academic work and, possibly, to a lowering of self-esteem.

The cause of restleness and difficulty in concentrating on academic work, as well as other behaviour problems such as those exhibited by Tomas and Benjamin, can also be related to the level of motivation and interest in what is happening in the classroom, both in terms of program and of class management and discipline practices. But, whereas Tomas's mother was not sure of the causes of the misbehaviour, Benjamin's mother discussed it with the teacher and the researcher as having psychological causes rooted in the home, namely, sibling rivalry. However, it seemed to the researcher that a mixture of both personality and environmental factors applied in both cases. The researcher also noticed that restlessness and lack of concentration with academic-type work, as well as other behaviour problems such as aggressiveness, seemed to be gender-linked. More boys than girls, at least in the lower grades, seemed to exhibit these problems, which tended to be exacerbated by second-language acquisition difficulties.

An issue directly related to this was the Silvas' reluctance to have psychological testing done on the child (also typical of the ethnic and class background of these parents), which put the child in a difficult situation. The teacher did not seem able to provide alternative help for what she suspected to be a learning disability. This is not to say that the parents were totally wrong in their perception of testing and the alternative help it might lead to for such children -- special education, which appears to be the course recommended for Jorge, is not a route to be taken lightly. What perplexed the researcher was the school's response to the parents' refusal to agree to testing. No alternative course of action was taken to provide extra help for Tomas, either in that year or the next.

Another conflict of a cultural nature arose from the way the school dealt with the issue of physical punishment with regard to Tomas. "Spanking" is a culturally acceptable practice, particularly among working-class parents. But Portuguese parents do not take lightly to having a social worker coming into their home without prior warning or without discussion with the teacher. Although the teachers are required by law to call on the social services without an explanation or a warning to parents for "child battering", this practise may cause undue strain between the home and the school. Certainly a more diplomatic and culturally-sensitive means of dealing with the situation could be found at the Board level.

Finally, we must consider Tomas's mother's reaction to school involvement which, is both typical and atypical of this type of parent. On the one hand, the fact that she at least tried to get involved, is unusual in our sample of Portuguese parents. In our sample we did not encounter middle-class Portuguese mothers involved in volunteer activities in the school any more than working-class ones, unlike the Anglo mothers. However, Mrs. Silva's experiences with the parents' committee and the school administrative staff left a bitter taste in her mouth. She felt great impatience with the former and a great deal of disappointment and resentment with the latter. The only activity where she felt motivated to contribute had to do with the fund-raising activities in the school. This deep-felt powerlessness to contribute and make changes in the realm of ideas (curriculum, etc) is quite typical of this group of parents. Whereas many feel they don't know enough or do not have the time to get involved, others, like Mrs Silva, are not happy about the program their child is exposed to but feel powerless to change anything. Their comments and complaints are dismissed as old-fashioned, old-world claptrap, when, in reality, their children are not having their needs met in school.

Middle-class parents, on the other hand, are seen to be more understanding of modern teaching practices and to be "doing all the right things". They provide a home environment from an early age which offers appropriate experiences for: preparation for academic behaviour -- experiences beyond television and family; self-regulation of behaviour (i.e. learning how to exercise choice as opposed to being told what to do); development of oral language through exploratory conversation; learning to relate to the printed text through reading for pleasure and informal instruction. They also ensure that their children have adequate working areas and see their work appreciated and displayed and not treated as mere childish scribbles. One has only to contrast the treatment accorded to Chris' stories and work space by his mother with the behaviour of Connie's mother, who routinely threw out her papers and refused to have her work displayed on the walls and prevented her from working in the living-room area because she had to cater for roomers living in the house (in addition to her full-time job in a factory).

However, many of the seemingly logical and sound practices advocated by teachers, such as experiences outside the family and self-regulation of behaviour are cultural and class-bound in nature. For example, more than one parent told the researcher that they disapproved of their children, male and female alike, going outside the home to play; they saw the commitment to a quiet home life to be a very desirable trait indeed. This would explain in some measure the central role of TV in some of these children's lives, as well as some of the parents' endorsement of the concept of homework (if not of home instruction). Other parents may be less enthusiastic about homework, but for different reasons than those offered by middle-class parents. Whereas the latter, such as Benjamin's mother, are against a heavy homework load for fear of overwhelming the child, the former are afraid of being overwhelmed by language barriers and new concepts in literacy and numeracy they do not understand themselves. For example, some parents, even when they spoke English (i.e. Samuel's mother), felt their knowledge of "new math" to be inadequate and they expressed concern in helping the child, lest they confuse him or her.

The researcher also found Portuguese parents equally divided in terms of educational aspirations for their children. The split is not so much along class lines in terms of what they would ideally like to see happen -- most would like their children to go as far as they wished -- but rather in terms of what they saw as possible, taking into account the child's school success, ability and level of interest. For example, Tomas's parents fervently wished that he would go to university and were dismayed that he showed a leaning towards things mechanical, like his father. David and Connie's parents, on the other hand, would at least be happy with them acquiring a trade, allowing them to go up a couple of notches in relation to what they, as parents, had accomplished.

We will now focus on some of the characteristics of the school environment and philosophy that appeared to be limiting Tomas's and other working-class children's progress in the early grades.

Teachers appear to be divided into two distinct groups according to the philosophy of education they hold. These could be called the "soft" and the "hard" approaches, the first being a developmental, more process-oriented approach and the second a curricular, more product-oriented one. Discipline and class management are an implicit but not recognized part of this distinction. Sometimes this contrast in philosophies is related to the distinction between the "lower" (Kindergarten to Grade Three) and the "higher grades" (Grade Three or Four to Six). At other times, it is the individual teaching style that is at stake, even for teachers of the same grade. Of course, the notions of "developmental"/"process-oriented" and "curricular"/"product-oriented" approaches are not necessarily to be equated and/or contrasted. It is just that I found, when formally or informally talking to teachers, the contrast in these two approaches came through implicitly or explicitly.

In Tomas's case, he was deemed by his kindergarten teacher to be at the developmental stage where he could not yet cope, either physically or intellectually, with the the demands of academic work. It is also recognized by teachers that developmental stage differences are partly gender and culture-related. Boys are more prone to develop mechanical skills first and girls are quicker to develop language skills. Also, boys are more energetic and are more likely to engage in activities which require movement, strength and rough play, whereas girls tend to choose quieter activities. Socialization plays a role in the type of play favoured, as well: construction, cars and sand-box for boys versus homecentre and crafts for girls. In addition, some teachers perceived some cultures to be less tolerant than others of certain types of play or more conducive to the development of small motor skills and tidiness. For example, European parents like the Silvas were seen to discourage children from dirtying themselves or doing things by themselves that encourage independence and risk-taking, e.g. dressing themselves, using scisors. Although it is expected that children will get dirty while playing outside, the parents may not be very enthusiastic about classroom activities in which they are encouraged to play with 'dirt', such as playing in the sandbox or at the water centre, making mud pies, etc. This is not surprising if one considers that many Portuguese fathers work in jobs, such as the construction industry, in which they get dirty in the course of the day. Oriental homes, by contrast, were seen as placing a great deal of emphasis on small motor activities, such as crafts.

Tomas (and the other Portuguese-speaking boys) was seen to be "typically" male in his interests and skills, and as such, he was lagging behind his younger sister in language development. The teacher often used this argument with his mother. Like Cristovao, Tomas had a predilection for construction and was good at it. The difference is that Cristovao also excelled at the more academic-type skills in a way that Tomas and David never did. And Cristovao's skill was somewhat more diversified as it included puzzles and other games that he had access to in his home. Another interesting detail is that Chris (and Benjamin) did not like to play with girls and did not seem to be interested in them. Tomas and David, by contrast, did show such an interest, although Tomas seemed to have very ambivalent feelings about the opposite sex.

Recognising that Tomas was behind and believing that he needed to repeat a year to catch up, the Grade One teacher recommended that Tomas spend an extra year in the lower grades in the expectation that he would "catch up" physically (i.e small-motor skills) and intellectually (i.e. abstract thinking) with the more developed children. Given the dearth of human resources in the classroom -- the teacher assistant "assists" rather than "teaches" -- the teacher considered that the one-to-one teaching that she believed would be required to "make a dent" in Tomas's understanding would not be commensurate with the probable learning outcomes at this stage of his development. In Grade One, whilst he was assigned the work of one of the lowest ability groups, in day-to-day practice he was nevertheless expected to do much of the work normally expected at this grade-level -- perhaps a compromise between the process- and product-oriented approaches.

Unlike Tomas's other two teachers, his Grade One teacher was much less vocal about her program philosophy. However, she did express a great desire for more group work headed by an adult and for sufficient resources to allow for more student participation and for one-to-one instruction. Occasionally she would get an extra adult in the classroom in the form of a student teacher for a period of about two weeks. Of all the project teachers, she was the one who tended to avail herself most often of this type of help (either by choice or by administrative necessity).

During his repeated year in the mixed Grade One/Two class, however, Tomas experienced a return to a more developmental type of approach, very much along the same lines as in the kindergarten years. In other words, children were only called upon to do what they were perceived to be individually able to do rather than being expected to meet the normal curriculum expectations for the grade. The Grade One/Two teacher had no formal teaching help other than a parents' volunteer program for non-readers which, in the long run, did not fulfill its goal. (She also relied on the volunteer work of a girl in a more advanced grade to help her prepare craft work materials).

Another factor to take into consideration in the Kindergarten and Grade One/Two classes was the use of split grades as a way to supply additional one-to-one teaching and learning situations. The philosophy of the split grades includes the premise that older students will teach younger students either by serving as role models or by actually teaching on demand. In fact, even in the straight Grade One class this could sometimes be seen at work with the group of more advanced students providing help for the rest of the class. However, in the Grade One/Two class, the researcher noticed that these students tended to be grouped in such a way that they interacted together, often on a friendship basis, as we saw in Benjamin's and Cristovao's cases. Interaction with the less advanced students seemed to be more widespread in the course of play-type activities. Sometimes ethnicity played a role in friendship patterns and transcended academic barriers, as in the case of Alexandre and Mark. Sometimes it reinforced them as in the case of Jocelyn and Asher.

These divisions in friendship patterns along activity, achievement and ethnicity lines are not, of course, hard and fast; and we have no doubt that a substantial amount of peer teaching does take place in the classroom, as we saw in Alexandre's case vis-a-vis the Grade Three students in his class. However this does not seem to have been the case with Tomas. His frustrated attempts at working with Benjamin, from whom he was willing to learn, were not reciprocated. Although most teachers thought highly of the split-grade or "family grouped" classes, in practice such classes tend to be more difficult to conduct than straight grade classes. They also require a great deal more preparation and effort on the part of the teacher. This is what Tomas's Grade One/Two teacher had to say about her split grade class.

> "This is my first [split grade class] and the One/Two split is horrendous. It should be outlawed given the development and support for students making the transition from Kindergarten to Grade One; there's enough pressure on them without having the grade twos thinking they are big shots. The socialization part is poor but a lot of people disagree with me and think grade twos pull them [grade ones] along. There's more pressure on a teacher teaching a grade one/two than on a kindergarten and I feel some resentment of the fact that I [supposedly] don't need an assistant. In spite of the philosophy of the upper echelon in the Board, there's a great pressure on the teacher why kids aren't reading at the proper grade level."

As stated in the introduction to this paper, teachers are well aware that despite Board philosophy about process-oriented instruction, in the end, it is results, "the product", that counts. Teachers would argue of course, that there is no contradiction between these two approaches -- product versus process- oriented teaching -- and they are right on the theoretical level. They must, of necessity, be complementary. There comes a point where process should translate into product; when natural development must not only be "aided along" but "pushed beyond" for substantial gains in learning to be made. Progress without measurable achievement (i.e. making the grade), as we saw in Tomas's case, is not highly valued in the school system. But, as previously stated, children of parents whose first language is not English, particularly those of working-class background, have more to learn upon entering school than other children; but their high progress is not always crowned with visible achievement.

A connected issue is the continuity of experience not only between home and school but within the school itself. As we mentioned before, the children's progress is not always as apparent to the next teacher they may get as their achievement, particularly when the new teacher is new to a multi-ethnic, multi-language school environment. This begs the whole issue of cultural sensitivity and awareness as well as that of teacher communication within the school, including the ESL and Heritage language components. These are not "language-deficient" children but rather "language-enriched" children; biligualism or trilingualism should be seen as part and parcel of the acquisition of literacy and not as a marginal issue. The researcher noticed, for example, that a substantial portion of the school staff in the two schools were fluent in languages other than English and French because of their immigrant roots, but this precious attribute always seemed to be underplayed in the school culture and community.

As a remedy for the contradiction that might arise between the process and product-oriented approaches, the developmental and curricular goals, we mentioned that teachers advocate more one-to-one teaching/learning, or small group teaching/learning. In both cases this could involve adults and peers but what seems to be at a premium in the early grades is one-to-one teaching with a child and adult in the home classroom. It is, by far, the most demanding and expensive solution to cases such as Tomas, Jorge, David and Connie, in short, those students whose first language is not English and whose home situation and sometimes interests and abilities are not conducive to their making substantial progress and gains in achievement.

Therefore, it would seem that, in practice, the contradiction may arise, in the long term, between the process-oriented and the product-oriented approaches because there are limited opportunities for teaching on a one-to-one basis between adult and child (in the home classroom) to serve as a catalyst for the "natural" intellectual maturation. Nevertheless, in this researcher's opinion, additional one-to-one instruction in the classroom would bear more fruit than repeating grades, as Tomas and Jorge were made to do. So, instead of catching up "naturally" with their school mates in the following grade, as some of the non-native speakers of English did (i.e. Wei-Men), or in the following year of the same grade, some children, like Tomas and Jorge do not, and continue to lag behind. These children would have needed additional instruction from the beginning, the kind that does not demand their withdrawal from the classroom. One teacher suggested that the ESL resources in her school were very limited and that when there were vacant places, the preference was given to older students to attend ESL classes. The younger children were not provided with supplementary instruction in English until they were old enough to attend reading clinic or other remedial programs in Grades Three or Four. Up until then, precious time and self-esteem may have been lost (personal communication, 1987). As the field-based researchers see it, however, more ESL instruction, as advocated by the Grade One teacher, may not be the answer, in view of the fact that children like Tomas were born in Canada and are not immigrant children with a solid oral and written foothold in their first language with skills that can be transferred from one language to the other.

Given their early entrance into the school system at around age 4, even if they know no English upon entry (which is often not the case given their exposure to TV or older siblings or in the neighbourhood) most Canadian-born ethnolinguistic minority children are well on their way to becoming fluent speakers of English by the end of Grade Two. In other words, they are acquiring the second language, English, at a very early and critical stage in their development, which is often not the case with children who immigrate to Canada in the course of their school years. As we saw in Tomas's case, in spite of the shortcomings in his oral expression at age 8, he was found to be within the normal range of English language development. Under these circumstances, withdrawal from the class to learn English would do more harm than good because it tends to result in language being treated in a decontextualized way. Furthermore, it deprives the child of what he or she most needs, that is to say the development of curriculum-appropriate forms of language, which are the ones in which these children tend to be lagging behind and upon which they are ultimately judged when it comes to achievement.

NOTE: The researcher wishes to thank G.L. Chang, A. Huynh, M.L. Lam and

M. Shechter, for helping her clarify a number of issues observed in the classroom, some of which were discussed in this paper. The principal investigator, G. Wells, also contributed to this process, namely through the discussion arising from the writing of these issues.

IN THE MIDDLE: CHILDREN IN THE OVERLAPPING WORLDS OF HOME AND SCHOOL

Gordon Wells

One of the most rewarding aspects of the Language and Learning Project is that it has given us the opportunity to look in considerable detail at the experiences of children from several ethnolinguistic minority communities as they make the transition from home to school. Through observing the children in the course of their regular activities at school and through interviews with their parents and teachers and with the children themselves, we have been able to build up a multi-faceted picture of the 'middle ground' that they inhabit - a territory that, depending upon the relations that exist between the two agencies responsible for its governance, may support and nourish the children's development or constrain or distort it.

On one thing both parents and teachers are in agreement: they want the best for the children in their care. Where they may disagree, however, is in their conception of 'the best', on the steps to be taken for its attainment, and on the part they should play in the shared enterprise. Reaching agreement on these crucial issues is not easy, even in a society that is relatively homogeneous with respect to the assumptions that are shared about the accepted goals of education and the means for attaining them. In a rapidly changing, heterogeneous society, such as that in which our study was conducted, there are far fewer shared assumptions, and so the difficulty of reaching agreement is considerably increased. So it is all the more important that all concerned should be aware of the possibility of misunderstanding, and even conflict, and do all in their power to resolve it.

The question to be addressed in this section of the report, therefore, is how far are parents, teachers and other educators successful in collaborating to create a middle ground in which all children receive the education which is best suited to enable them to achieve their full potential in the context of the society of which we are all members? And, to the extent that problems still exist, what steps might be taken to overcome them?

These questions are not new, of course. Study groups in various ethnic communities, in schools, school boards, and in the Ministry of Education have all, in their various ways, addressed the central issue of home-school relations and made recommendations, which have done much to create a more informed climate of opinion. However, what has been less common is the assembling of a corpus of case-studies that both describe in their unique particularity the factors that shape the experiences of individual children from different ethnolinguistic communities and, at the same time, allow comparisons to be made between them that bring out their similarities and differences.

The preparation of such case-studies has been one of the achievements of the Language and Learning Project, and some of these have been presented in the four papers, written by the field researchers, which are to be found in an earlier section of this report. Selected from a much larger pool that might have been presented, the studies of the children that they chose to write about give a fair representation of the diversity to be found in the various communities and should therefore help to dispel some of the more common ethnic stereotypes. At the same time, they point up a number of issues that cut across ethnic and linguistic boundaries and which are in urgent need of attention. It is to a consideration of some of these issues that this section of the report will be devoted.[1]

The Expectations of Parents and Teachers

Although the majority of the children we observed made satisfactory progress over the course of the investigation, there was a small proportion that gave cause for concern. Some of these children have been included in the field researchers' case studies, in an attempt to identify the nature of their difficulties.

From the careful documentation of these cases, it is clear that there are many factors involved, including, in the cases of Ari and Tomas, particular difficulties in the acquisition of written English. However, these difficulties cannot be attributed simply to membership of a minority ethnolinguistic group, as some teachers have tended to suppose, for the cases of other children from the same ethnolinguistic communities in the field researchers' reports make it clear that children from similar backgrounds can be very successful in school. In particular, as cases such as that of Helen, the Greek-speaking child, demonstrate, progress is in no way impeded by the fact that the language predominantly spoken in the home is different from that used in the classroom.

However, there does seem to be one factor that all the documented cases of children experiencing difficulties have in common, and that is a failure on the part of the parents and teachers of these children to agree on how best to help them. This problem can, in fact, be seen to have two components: differences in beliefs about what constitutes an appropriate education, and communication about the children's achievements and difficulties and the steps to be taken to deal with the latter. However, whilst such disagreements were particularly salient in the case of children experiencing difficulties, they also occurred in some cases where the children were making satisfactory progress. This is an issue, therefore, that should be seen to be of very general concern.

From the interviews with the parents, it became obvious that many parents were less than happy about certain aspects of their children's education. To some extent, this resulted from different assumptions about the role and responsibilities of teachers and schools, which are deeply rooted in particular cultures. One example of this would be the desire expressed by some of the Chinese parents to see a greater emphasizing of certain social values than most teachers would find acceptable. To some extent, also, the dissatisfactions expressed stemmed from a mismatch between the parents' own experiences as students in schools and the practices and emphases that they perceived to constitute their children's experiences.

More serious than either of these types of dissatisfaction, however, were concerns voiced by some parents that teachers were not fulfilling their responsibilities as thoroughly as they should. For example, although expressed by one parent in terms of not correcting the child's errors in writing and math, the underlying concern that came across was that the teacher was not paying close enough attention to the child's performance to provide the necessary guidance and feedback.

Whether or not the complaint was justified in this instance, the concern is a very real one and one that is shared by many parents, not only in these four schools but in other schools and boards in Ontario. Parents very properly want to be assured that their children are receiving tuition that is enabling them to make progress towards meeting the generally agreed objectives of formal education, and they look for evidence that this is the case. Where the practices that they recognize as effective schooling are absent, they quite naturally want to know why.

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[1] Although the presented case-studies concern children from the Chinese-, Greek- and Portuguese-speaking communities, our observations give us reason to believe that most of the issues discussed in this section apply equally to children from homes in which English is the first or dominant language.

However, the solution to this problem, we believe, is not that of changing classroom practices to implement those actually suggested by the parents. In the first place, this is not practically feasible, for in any one class there will be children whose parents want very different, and sometimes incompatible, styles of instruction. Secondly, the parents' concern is not so much to control the curriculum and the mode in which it is implemented, so as to ensure that whatever practices are used should be effective for their own children. The majority expect to have confidence that teachers, as professionals, will have the knowledge to make appropriate decisions in these matters and the skills and conscientiousness to put these decisions into effect in a fair and effective manner.

If this analysis of the situation is correct, the solution to the problem would seem to require two forms of action. First, there is a need for schools and individual teachers to review their current practices to ensure that they are actually achieving their intended goals and, secondly, having assured themselves that this is indeed the case, they should take much more active steps to enter into dialogue with parents, particularly those who express concerns or whose children are experiencing particular difficulties, in order that there is a shared understanding of how the needs of individual children are being met.

In order to establish whether existing practices are effective, it is necessary, first, to make explicit both the goals to be achieved and the grounds on which particular practices are considered to be effective in meeting them and, second, to observe whether the practices themselves are operating as anticipated. For example, where a time is regularly scheduled to allow a class to visit the library to make their own selection of books to read, one first has to make explicit the reasons for believing that the self-selection of reading material has an important part to play in helping students to become versatile and enthusiastic readers and the grounds for making this a class, rather than an individual, activity; one then has to observe the way the students use this time to see whether the time is spent on selecting books rather than on other matters and whether they have and utilise strategies for making appropriate book selections. To the extent that one is dissatisfied with what one finds at any stage in this review, one should make a principled change - either in rethinking the basis for the practice or in modifying its actual operation - and continue to review the outcomes.

Whilst it is important that individual teachers should keep their programmes under review on a continuing basis, it is equally important that practices that involve more than one teacher, or the school as a whole, should be reviewed in the same manner, and that time schould be systematically scheduled to allow this to happen. Unless all the teachers who are involved in, for example, the annual decisions about student promotion, or the choice between alternative additional support for individual students, such as withdrawal for ESL periods, time in the Learning Centre, or additional resources in the home classroom, the actual operation of such practices runs the risk of being inconsistent and fragmentary. Equally important, if such practices are not systematically reviewed and, as necessary revised, by all the staff concerned, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for individual members of staff to present a coherent school policy when discussing the cases of particular children with their parents. Communication *within* the school is thus of vital importance if there is to be effective dialogue *between* school and home.

It is such dialogue which needs to be the second form of action in meeting the problem of parental concern and dissatisfaction. What is required is a positive attempt to enter into more open discussion. in which both teachers and parents could learn more about each others' expectations and concerns and attempt to achieve mutual understanding. This is particularly important where there is concern. on either side. about the progress of a particular child. In the cases of both Tomas and Ari, for example, what was so detrimental to these children's progress was not so much the differences in beliefs and expectations between the children's parents and their teachers, serious though these were, as the complete failure to achieve two-way communication. For, as already discussed, when parents consider that their concerns are not being listened to, they naturally get upset, and when they do not understand the basis on which decisions which affect their children are being made, they themselves are not in a good position to respond appropriately.

In order to make such discussion possible. schools should obviously be ready to respond to overtures by parents. However. it cannot be expected that such overtures will always be made - even when a child gives cause for concern - particularly if the parents already have doubts about their likely success, either from past experience or because of their own limited command of English. The onus must therefore fall on the school to open, and keep open, the channels of communication.

Of course. schools do already have established procedures for communicating with parents, in the form of report cards, interviews and parent-teacher associations. In the case of parents with limited command of English, they have also made various arrangements for interpretation. However, it has to be admitted that these procedures are not succeeding, as is clear from the parental responses reported above and from some of the comments from teachers quoted in the case studies. And the reasons are not difficult to identify. The report cards do not constitute dialogue, they only transmit information - which in itself is often less than self-explanatory. The interviews, like the report cards, usually assume the school's perspective and rarely allow for a discussion of underlying philosophy; indeed, in some cases, they are little more than a perfunctory ritual. (In the case of Michael, it will be recalled, Huynh reports that on one occasion the parents were led to believe that there was no need for an interview, which they - erroneously - took to mean that Michael was no longer experiencing any difficulties in reading, writing and spelling). And the parent-teacher association, which might be the occasion for a genuine exploration of alternative points of view, is often poorly attended, particularly by precisely those parents who find the school's ways alien to their own values and expectations.

However, it is equally true that, for those parents who are most in tune with the school's philosophy, the existing procedures are working satisfactorily. What this suggests, therefore, is that it is not the formal procedures, as such, that need to be reexamined, but the ways in which they are being utilized. What is most needed, it seems, is for both parents and teachers to learn more about each others' beliefs and assumptions, so that dialogue, when it does occur, will start from an informed base.

It is here that teachers can take the initiative, both by becoming better informed about the different cultural traditions from which their students come and, in particular, the different concepts of education which are embedded in those cultures, and also by making opportunities to explain the rationale for what they discover to be the less well understood aspects of their classroom practice. Representatives of the various ethnic communities whose children attend the school might be approached to help with the former, perhaps by leading a staff seminar or by suggesting other sources of information. The input received in this way would then help teachers with the more difficult task of explaining their classroom programmes in ways that would be understood by those starting with different cultural assumptions.

What is being suggested, it should be clear, is not that teachers abandon their own beliefs and the practices that follow from them, in an attempt to meet the expectations of different groups of parents, but rather that they should be well enough informed to take those expectations into account when describing their programmes and explaining how children would benefit from them. Of course, if, in the process of reflecting on their practices as they thought about how to explain them, acceptable alternatives occurred to them that might fit better with the expectations of some groups of parents, there might be reasons to make changes. But the most important aim would be to enable parents to understand those practices and the rationale behind them, since it is only when there is a basis of mutual understanding that meaningful dialogue is possible.

On some particular issues, however, it might be appropriate to try to meet the parents half-way. One such issue is 'homework'. Some of the arguments put forward by parents in favour of children bringing work from school to be done at home seem to have much to recommend them, and certainly there would be much to be gained from the teacher-parent collaboration that could result from the implementation of an agreed homework policy. To be able to observe or, even better, participate in their children's school work would enable the parents to become informed about what is happening in the classroom and, ideally, to support that work with additional help and encouragement. On the other hand, teachers are right to resist the request to provide routine exercises to be done at home, both because this would create a false impression of the classroom programme and also because such exercises would not elicit the sort of parental involvement that they would like to encourage (see, for example, the disagreement that existed between Tomas's mother and his Kindergarten teacher on the value of pencil and paper work to be done at home).

However, the more open-ended tasks that teachers might prefer, such as continuing some aspect of a classroom project, or watching a (documentary or narrative) television programme and discussing it afterwards, also pose problems, in that some parents have little confidence that they know how to engage in such activities appropriately; some also feel that their command of English is insufficient. An additional serious problem for some parents is that their long working hours allow little opportunity for such sustained interaction. Clearly, therefore, the question as to what forms of homework might be most appropriate is not an easy one to answer, bearing in mind that most classes contain children living in homes with very different human and material resources. Here again, however, two-way communication and a willingness to try out alternatives are likely to be essential in making a success of whatever policy is adopted.[2]

Reporting to Parents

As already suggested, an important part of successful communication between school and home is reporting on the child's progress and achievement. Minimally, this requires that the information contained in successive reports should be both consistent and intelligible. Unfortunately, there are no self-evident answers as to how these criteria can best be met, but present practices frequently leave much to be desired, as is clear from the case-studies of a number of individual children.

To some extent, the two criteria are interdependent: it is difficult to use a procedure consistently if the terms employed do not carry the same meaning for all concerned. For this reason, evaluations couched in terms of grade level are unlikely to be effective, since judgments about what constitutes a Grade Two reading level, for example, are likely to be both subjective and inexplicit.

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[2] While our study was in progress, initiatives were taken by the Toronto Board of Education to develop appropriate homework policies. These certainly had an influence on one of the four schools, where a considerable amount of time in staff meetings was given to an exploration of possible alternatives.

This problem of the same terms being used with different meanings may account for the inconsistent messages that were conveyed to both Ari's and Michael's parents by the evaluations of their children's achievement in different areas of the curriculum made by teachers in successive years. There are, of course, other conceivable explanations, including the possibility that the teachers wrote their reports without ever having read what the children's previous teachers had written about them. Whatever the explanation, the parents had reasonable grounds for feeling that the schools were not satisfactorily fulfilling their responsibility.

One solution that has been tried in relation to this problem is the use of standardized test scores, although none of the four schools used tests in this way. However, for the reasons set out in more detail in the discussion of evaluation elsewhere in this report, the information conveyed by such scores is not of great value to parents, except in enabling them to see how their child stands in relation to the norm for the grade level. For the parents of those children who are scoring above the norm, such information may be a source of satisfaction, but it is of little help to the parents of the other 49 per cent. What they, and indeed all parents, need is a more precise account of what their children have successfully learned to do and the areas in which they would most benefit from help. In effect, what is being suggested, is taking Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the zone of proximal development and using it systematically as the basis for the report.

To adopt such an approach would meet a third, and equally important, criterion for the report card, namely that it should provide an informative basis for discussion between parents and school personnel about what steps should be taken to ensure the child's progress. Had such informed discussion taken place in the case of Ari, it seems likely that his difficulty with written language could have been dealt with in such a way that his parents' action in transferring him to another school could have been avoided. Similarly, Michael's parents and his different teachers might have been able to arrive at a plan of action to help him with the difficulties he obviously experienced with the orthographic conventions of English.

Creating a Home-School Partnership

A common strand runs through all the preceding paragraphs: the need to create a partnership between home and school that will work for the interests of the children for whom they have a joint responsibility. For, if we take seriously the evidence of the benefit of parent's involvement in their children's education, we must explore ways to enable them more effectively to take on that role in a manner which is in harmony, rather than at odds, with the framework provided by the school curriculum. And, as we have argued, an essential first step in this direction is making the nature of that framework clear, both through an explanation of its rationale and through a clarification of the means used for monitoring individual chidren's progress.

This is a matter that is being given high priority in many educational jurisdictions, and reports of various schemes that have been piloted can be found in a variety of journals, notably the issue of *Language Arts*, published in January 1989. From these various sources, two broad approaches seem worthy of further exploration. The first concerns the curriculum as a whole.

Here, it has been found successful to create an occasion for the presentation of the outcomes of one class's activity over a unit of study, in the form of models, writings, art work, and so on, and to have the children there to explain what they have been doing and to answer questions. Because their own children are involved, most parents will make an effort to attend such an occasion, particularly if the timing is right and refreshments are provided. Following the opportunity to go round the display, probably accompanied by their own child as commentator, the parents are invited to listen to a short talk by the teacher about the sorts of learning that have been taking place and how they contribute to the larger objectives of the programme. There is then an opportunity for discussion, during which parents can ask questions about any aspects that they find puzzling or problematic. Teachers who have organized such an occasion have nearly always found it to be a successful way of explaining what they are doing and why they are doing it, and parents, faced with clear and concrete evidence of what has been achieved, have frequently been sufficiently convinced to become supporters of the programme and willing collaborators in future projects.

It may not always be easy to mount a display of this kind. However, an alternative that could be just as successful is to put together a video programme consisting of short extracts which show children engaged in the sorts of sctivities that the teacher wishes to highlight, together with, where possible, extracts in which the children talk with each other or the teacher about what they have been doing. Such a video-tape can either be used as the basis for an illustrated talk by the teacher, as in the scenario described above or, with a commentary interspersed between the recorded extracts, it can become a self-contained programme which parents could meet to view and discuss with or without a teacher, or which they could borrow to play on their VCR at home.

What makes all these alternatives effective in communicating with parents is that they contain two elements in juxtaposition: first, actual examples of the sort of activities that their own or similar children engage in in the programme that concerns them and, second, the teacher's explanation of the significance of these activities in terms of the rationale for the programme as a whole. A further point of importance is that, whichever mode of presentation is selected, it is clear to the parents that what they are seeing and hearing is embedded in the context of the daily life of the particular school that their child is attending. For this reason, it seems likely that the mode in which the children themselves are involved in explaining what they have been doing and in answering parents' questions is likely to be the most successful.

The second approach to building a school-home partnership that we wish to mention concerns a new way of thinking about the report card. It has three important features. First, the record of the child's progress and achievement is based on regular systematic observations of the child at work, as she or he engages in the range of activities that make up the curricular programme. This record is accompanied by samples of the child's work, collected at intervals over the year and placed in a folder, so that it is possible, by comparing later with earlier samples, to see what progress has been made. In this way, the formal, summative, evaluation of the child draws upon, and gives value to, information of a more informal and formative kind. Furthermore, with this evidence to hand, discussions with the parents about the child's progress can take on a concreteness that makes them much more useful than such meetings have often been in planning whatever sort of collaborative action seems appropriate.

The second important feature is that the record calls for a similar input from all teachers who are involved in the child's education and, in particular, the teachers of English as a Second Language and of the Heritage Language, where this is appropriate. Quite apart from the more rounded profile that results, the involvement of teachers other than the homeroom teacher in the building up of the record encourages a more careful and systematic comparing of perspectives between them, which can only be to the child's advantage. A lack of such coordination, both between the teachers involved with the child at any one time and between those in successive years, seemed to be one of the factors contributing to the problems of the least successful children described in the case-studies.

The third, and perhaps most innovatory, feature of this approach is the inclusion of the perspectives of both the parents and the children on the record form. At the beginning of the year, the first meeting with the parents is largely given over to a discussion of what to them seems salient about their child's education and this information is recorded on the record form by the teacher in the parents' presence. This has value in two significant ways. First, the teacher has to listen carefully in order to be able to write an accurate summary of what the parents have said, thus reversing the traditional role relationship in such meetings, in which it is usually the teacher who does most of the talking. Secondly, the parents see their perspective being validated by being included, in writing, on the official record form. A similar interview with the child has the same sort of advantages; it also allows for a triangulation of all three perspectives, with the result that mismatches, if they occur, can be further followed up.

In schools of the Inner London Education Authority, where a version of this form of reporting has been piloted in the last few years, both teachers and parents have been enthusiastic about the greater sense of partnership that has developed as a result of a more collaborative approach to monitoring and planning for children's educational progress (Barrs et al., 1988). On the basis of this evidence, many educational jurisdictions outside London, including some in Canada, are also experimenting with this or a similar scheme.

To develop a better partnership with parents is part of the official policy of all four schools and, in each, efforts are being made to achieve this goal. However, these tend to be piecemeal rather than being undertaken in relation to an objective that receives the concerted and sustained attention of all members of the school staff. No doubt one reason for this is that schools are constantly being called upon to take on new responsibilities, with the effect that many teachers already feel overburdened and unable to meet all the requirements that are thrust upon them as effectively as they might wish. In urging that attention be given to the creation of a more effective partnership between school and children's homes and communities, there is a danger of being seen to be simply adding to the load. However, this is partly a matter of the manner in which the issue is raised and of the extent to which teachers are themselves encouraged to take responsibility for finding solutions that meet the needs of their own particular school and the community that it serves. This is an issue that is discussed in more detail elsewhere in this report.

Bilingualism in Relation to Success in School

Until quite recently, it was a widely accepted belief that bilingualism was an impediment to educational success, at least during the early years of schooling. The comparatively lower achievement of many children from ethnic minority communities was attributed to their continued use of their community language, which, according to the prevailing theories, either retarded their acquisition of the language of the school or, still worse, overtaxed their brains and led to linguistic and cognitive confusion. As a result of these views, the use by the child of his or her first language on the school premises was strongly discouraged and parents were frequently advised to use only the language of the majority community when interacting with their children, whether or not they themselves could speak it fluently.

Fortunately for those who wished their children to participate in their cultural heritage - of which language is probably the most important constitutive element - the theories which lent support to these beliefs have been challenged and strong arguments have been advanced for the advantages of bilingualism (e.g. Swain and Cummins, 1979). Educators, too, have come to recognize the harm that can result from disvaluing the language in which a child has constructed his or her most fundamental concepts about the world and, through interaction with close family members, established his or her sense of personal identity. Parents, too, whether through inability to follow the advice they were given or because of proper ethnic pride, have refused to replace the language of the home with that of the larger society and have, instead, pressed for its recognition and maintenance as part of their children's education.

Nevertheless, there are still many who doubt the wisdom of actively encouraging children to be bilingual and do their best to discourage it, either overtly or covertly - as can be seen in some of the case studies presented above. It is important, therefore, that the arguments of the theorists be reinforced by empirical evidence that children who are bilingual can be just as successful in school as their monolingual peers. For such a conclusion our study provides strong support, both in the lack of significant between-group differences in test performance by the later elementary grades and in the individual case studies of successful children from Chinese, Greek and Portuguese ethnolinguistic backgrounds. From both these sources of evidence, one can conclude that, in general, bilingualism is certainly not an impediment to educational success but rather it has the potential to be a positive advantage.

It has to be admitted, however, that, at present, this potential is rarely exploited in a systematic way. The case studies make reference to children acting as interpreters for newly-arrived children from their own ethnolinguistic community with whom their teachers cannot communicate directly; in such cases, the child's competence in two languages is given recognition as having a pragmatic value. There are also occasional references to children's inclusion of words written in the script of their first language being appreciated as adding 'colour' to the cover of a story they are publishing. In one classroom, too, an occasion was observed when children talked about the meanings of their names in their first language. But, in general, the fact that, in many classrooms a substantial proportion of children have more than one linguistic system for representing and communicating about their experience, is politely ignored.

This is certainly an advance on the previous state of affairs, in which bilingualism was treated as a handicap. However, in failing to capitalize on the contribution to their own and to the whole class's intellectual and cultural development which the richness of such linguistic diversity can make, the present situation is still far from satisfactory. From a cognitive point of view, children who speak two - or sometimes three or more - languages have the means for accessing more than one cultural world view, and therefore the basis for discovering that, on most issues of importance, there are alternative perspectives, each rooted in a coherent body of beliefs and values. Potentially this puts them in an advantageous position to develop flexible thinking strategies and to avoid ethnocentric prejudice. Having command of two or more languages, they also have the basis for developing a much richer understanding of language as a cultural resource for thinking and communicating, and a sensitivity to the nuances of language use. Each of these attributes of bilingualism also has its social correlate in enabling full participation in more than one cultural group and, hence, a richer personal experience. Furthermore, whilst explicit recognition and discussion of alternative culturally-based ways of thinking and feeling, and of the linguistic expression of those differences, in the course of regular classroom activities would not give monolingual children the full advantages of bilingualism, it could enable them to discover the existence of such alternatives and to appreciate that each has its own validity. They might also be led to reflect upon the less than absolute rightness of their own values and assumptions.

At present, there seems to be little thought given to ways in which bilingual students' linguistic competencies, and the accompanying first-hand knowledge of more than one culture, can be exploited in the activities in which they engage in the various areas of the curriculum. Certainly, this will not be easy, but the one or two episodes that we did observe, such as the exploration of the situation in Cyprus by a Grade Three classroom that contained many children of Greek background (Shechter, this report) show something of the potential that such activities have for the whole class and for the bilingual and bicultural children, in particular.

Education in a Multicultural Society

Clearly, a discussion of ways to exploit more fully the rich resource of students' bilingual competencies in the classroom is part of the much larger debate about education in and for a multicultural society. And, on this score, too, the prevailing attitude in the four schools in which we made our observations tends to be one of lukewarm acceptance of diversity, punctuated by occasional multicultural 'celebrations'. Only very occasionally did we observe any serious exploration of the implications of living in a multicultural society, either in the classroom or in the school staffroom. (It must also be admitted that, even in our own research team, made up of people from nine different cultural backgrounds, we rarely acknowledged the significance of this diversity for our discussions of such crucial issues as what it means to be literate or the desirability of student initiative in learning, or its effect on our ability to develop effective collaborative working practices.)

A partial explanation of this myopia seems to be that the impact of cultural diversity is still too new to have been assimilated into the ways in which educators, as a professional group, think about our responsibilities. Many teachers and administrators, themselves monlingual, may never, personally, have had their basic assumptions challenged. For them, the primary task of schools is to transmit the accepted knowledge, skills and values of the society in which they themselves received their education. From this perspective, the fact that many of the students entering the schools speak a language different from their own is merely a temporary inconvenience. Once this has been remedied by teaching them English, in separate programmes taught by specialist teachers, the business of schooling can continue as usual. To all intents and purposes, they can then be treated in the same way as the more familiar monolingual speakers.

What is surprising, however, is the fact that, particularly in the larger urban areas, a substantial proportion of those actually teaching in our schools are themselves bilingual. Yet, as our observations show, they seem to have become so assimilated, professionally, into the dominant monolingual culture that their own experiences as minority students have been forgotten or suppressed. The result is that those who might be most expected to press for an examination of the implications of cultural and linguistic diversity are often amongst those who most strongly support the unquestioned assumptions of the monocultural, monolinguistic tradition.

The problem, it therefore seems, has deeper roots than the relatively simple matter of whether educators themselves speak more than one language. What is at issue is the much more fundamental matter of the attitude that is taken to 'truth' and 'authority'. If an educational system, reflecting the dominant values of the larger society in which it is embedded, is transmission-oriented in relation to the knowledge, skills and values that make up the curriculum and hierarchical in its administrative and organizational structure, there will be little encouragement of an open-minded, exploratory attitude to new challenges, and conformity to authority will be seen as the hallmark of a good teacher and as the surest route to promotion.

Yet, the willingness to question old certainties and, if necessary to abandon or modify them, is an essential prerequisite for the creation of a climate in which multiculturalism can flourish. For a serious commitment to the valuing of the many cultural traditions that are represented by the students and teachers in our schools goes beyond the celebration of a wider range of traditional holidays and the occasional introduction of their ethnic foods and artefacts. It has, as an inevitable consequence, the acceptance of the fact that, on most issues of importance there will be a diversity of beliefs and values, each with its own cultural claims to validity. In these circumstances, there can be no absolute truth nor unquestionable authority. As a result, each individual is faced with the requirement to make his or her own decision, on the basis of experience and of the evidence available in the current context, but also knowing that that decision may need to be revised, and that others, in the same context, may arrive at a different decision.

For this to be possible, classrooms need to become communities in which all members strive for a shared understanding whilst recognizing that, on many issues about which people care deeply, there will be alternative and sometimes incompatible points of view. And for teachers to be able to create such classroom communities, they will have to be flexible and independent thinkers, who can themselves tolerate the ambiguity of there being no certain answers to many of the professional issues that confront them. But this, in turn, requires an organizational structure which is equally accepting of diversity and supportive of those teachers who take the initiative in trying to improve the learning opportunities that they provide for their students, even when such initiatives may depart from the norms which have traditionally been sanctioned by authority.

If the foregoing analysis is correct, it is clear that, for multiculturalism to become a reality in our schools, there must be a commitment, at every level in the educational system, to the valuing of the diversity of the cultures and language comptetences that students bring to school as part of their cultural and personal identity. There must also be a commitment to the active exploration of the means for exploiting this diversity to enrich each students's intellectual and social development, both individually and as a member of the larger society. However, to achieve this commitment will take more than the promulgating of the appropriate policies, at Ministry or School Board level, which has already taken place. Real success will only be achieved - as is already beginning to happen in isolated cases - when teachers are encouraged to explore what is possible in their own particular situations and given appropriate support to enable them to collaborate with their colleagues to develop policies and practices which build on those discoveries.

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